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Defence & Offence RAAF Bases

in

Northern Australia

On 19 February 1942 Darwin was severely bombed by the same Japanese force that had attacked the mighty American Base of Pearl Harbour and led by the same commanding Admiral and the same Air Attack Leader.

Eight ships were sunk and others beached and burnt together with 243 were killed, and another 300 wounded, all in the space of sixty minutes. There was every possibility that an invasion was inevitable as most of the township had also been destroyed. Administration of the Northern Territory was moved south to Alice Springs. Darwin would go on to suffer fifty more bombing raids.

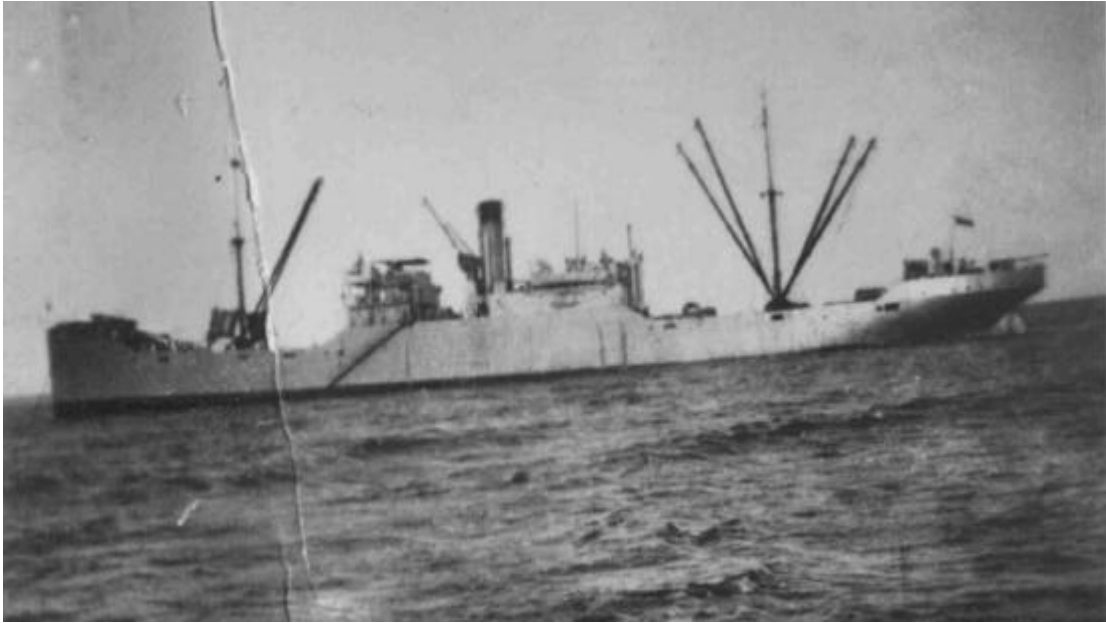
Air Strips had to be hurriedly constructed so that some defence of Darwin, with inadequate fighters, could be implemented as well as strips capable of handling bombers.

Early in 1943 there was an urgent need to provide a RAAF Base in the Kimberly region of Western Australia so that aircraft could be within the range of Japanese Bases in Java, Sumatra, Celebes (Indonesia), Borneo and Timor as well as give protection to shipping movements between Fremantle and Darwin.

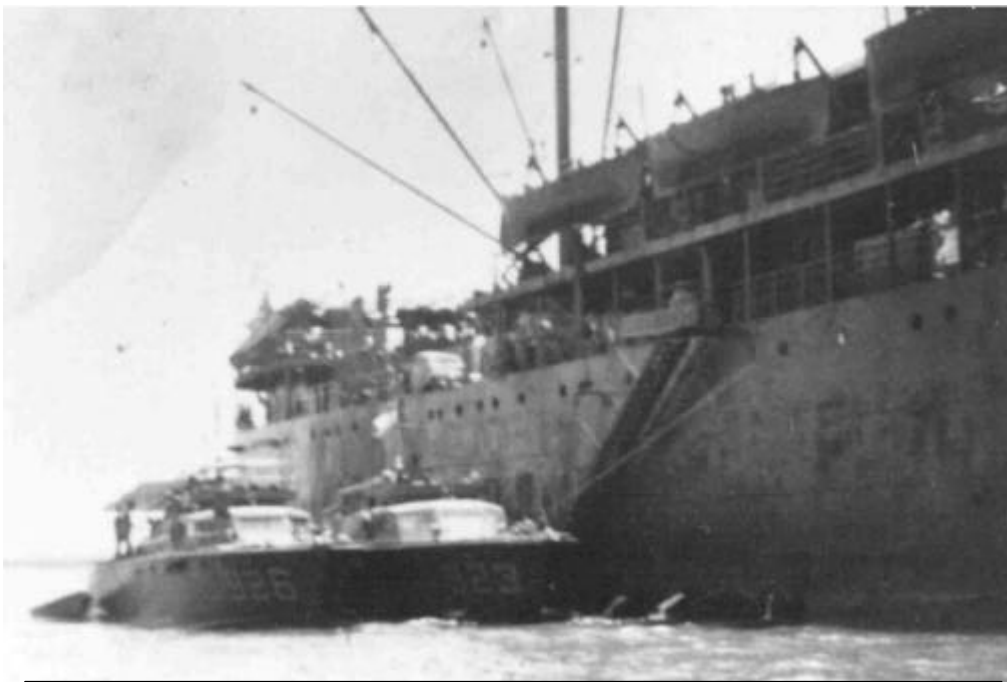
The Benedictine Mission, on the King Edward River, had a small airstrip known as Drysdale, so RAAF surveyors were sent to evaluate the possibility of utilising this small strip their recommendation was not to proceed with the upgrading. No.12 Survey and Design set about to find a more suitable site in the Anjo Peninsula area where there was also a suitable beach landing area.

FLGOFF Thomas Oswald Butcher entered the area with a Team to survey a site for a Base that would later be named Truscott in honour of the RAAF Fighter Pilot, SQNLDR Keith "Bluey" Truscott.

The "Southern Cross" supply ship was sent to West Bay to support the Survey Team and to take soundings of the Bay.



The “Admiral Chase” was a regular supply ship during the construction of RAAF Base Truscott. Every piece of construction equipment, supplies, machinery, etc etc had to be brought ashore from ships anchored in deep water, by Landing Barges & Dumb Barges of the Marine Section. (George Churchill)



“Koolinda” was another of the ships that regularly brought supplies, fuel and personnel to West Bay. Moored along side were two RAN Air Sea Rescue Boats, No.926 & No. 923. From Truscott Base, Mitchell & Liberator bomber went on bombing missions as well as Catalina Flying Boats. Spitfire fighters operated in a defensive role. (G. Churchill)

RAAF Base Truscott**"West Bay Marine Section"**

in the Kimberlies of W.A.

Sergeant Norman Greaves entered the RAAF in May 1942 and went on to serve until June 1946. Norm applied for and was posted to No.8 Fitter Motor Boat course in February 1943 then to RAAF Rathmines to complete his "Marine Section" training. A short time was spent at Lake Bolga where flying boats were repaired. He was involved in bringing two motorized, 60 foot steel barges from the Ford Works in Geelong to Port Melbourne where they were loaded on a ship.

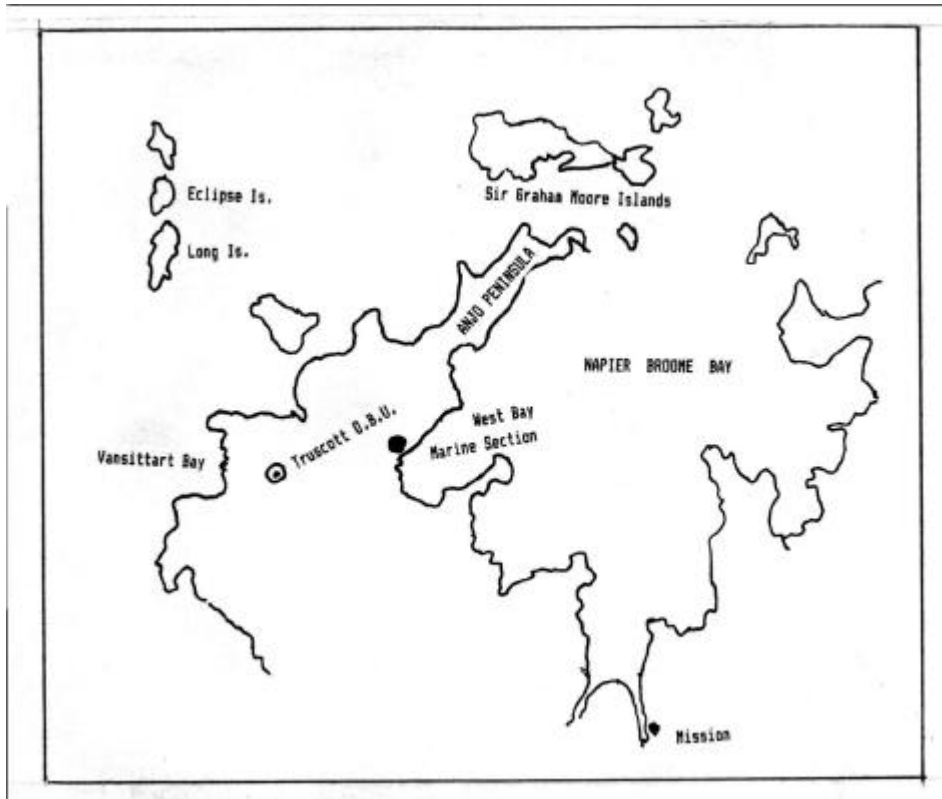
A posting to Sydney followed where he boarded a ship, loaded with a variety of Marine Section craft. As with all such postings, RAAF personnel did not know their destination. Their ship made the long voyage to Darwin where Norman joined the No. 52 O.B.U. Marine Section at the Catalina Base in Doctor's Gulley.

In March 1944 Norman joined to No.58 O.B.U. in Darwin and a Liberty ship, loaded a variety of Marine Section vessels, equipment, and supplies, sailed for West Bay in the Kimberly region of Western Australia. The construction of a large air strip and facilities had been the job for No.14 Mobile Works Squadron. These MWS groups would build many airfields in the Islands to the north and frequently followed in behind the attacking invading Australian Forces. Construction of the air fields often came under the fire from the defending Japanese forces while the bulldozers and earth works machines, operated by the RAAF personnel, went on working.

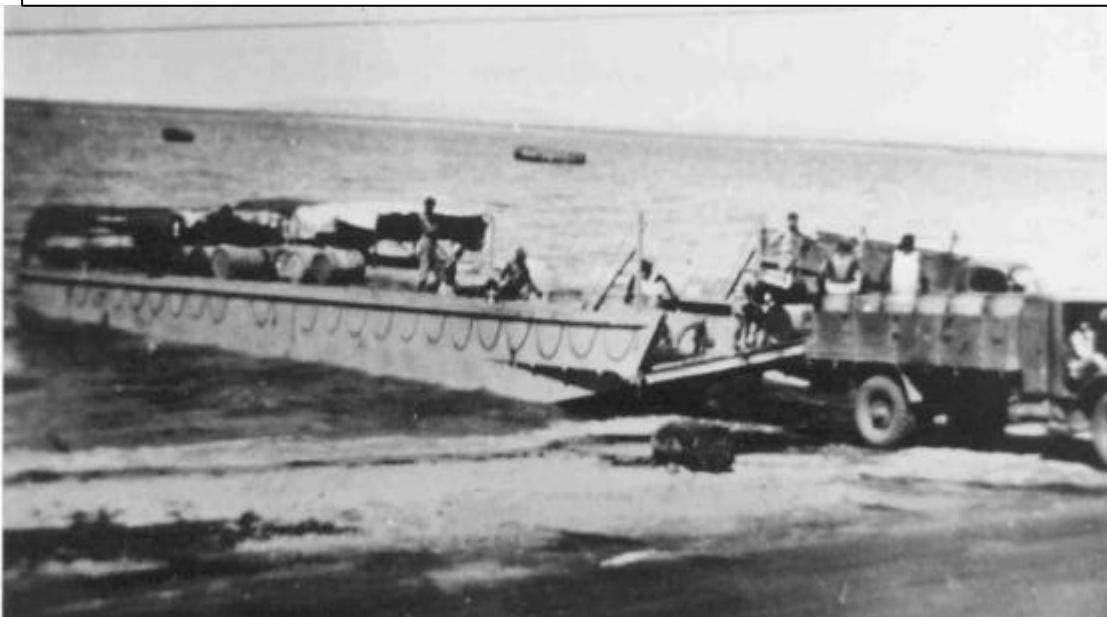
At West Bay the Liberty ship had to anchor out in safe depth of water, unload the Marine Section boats and barges before the No.14 MWS earth moving equipment and supplies could be taken ashore. Loaded trucks, on the barges, were taken to a prepared section on the beach where they drove off and went directly to Base. This procedure would take some three weeks of constant toil (12 hour shifts) each day. The RAAF Marine Section crews manning the motorised barges, the "Dumb" barges were towed by Work boats, along with the rest of support personnel, came in for some flattering comments from the Liberty ship's Captain, for their efficiency. One of the R.N. Coxswains of a barge was given the nickname of "sinkem" when he had the misfortune to overturn his barge. Nicknames were commonplace in all Units and often referred to some mishap or of a personal characteristic. At Millingimbi, one MS Engineer was called "Silent Joe!" being of a talkative nature.

Some four months would slip by before all the construction of facilities were completed, but the Strip was fully operational well before the MWS left. Mail and personnel arrived on a regular basis by Dakota (DC3)"Daks".

RAAF Base Truscott & West Bay



Landing Barges 018. and Dumb Barges were responsible for bringing ashore, from anchored cargo ships. Every piece of equipment, machinery and supplies needed to keep Truscott fully operational was landed this way. (A. Wilson)





Marine Section Personnel made innovative improvements to their living and messing quarters utilising local timber as well as timber used on visiting ship cargoes. The men of this small Unit set up their camp near the beach and resisted all attempts to relocate on the Main Base with persuasive logic.

(G. Churchill)



A major cargo element was drums (44gal.) of aviation fuel needed to supply all the aircraft movements as well as the Marine Section boats.

(G. Churchill)

Spitfires took up residence, while Liberators and Mitchells would stage through on their way to a bombing mission. Catalinas frequently landed in West Bay where the Marine Section Refueling barge came along side and topped up the aircraft fuel tanks. These "Cats" would attack the targets in the islands now known as Indonesia, leaving West Bay in the afternoon and not return the following morning. On at least one occasion a Cat landed and did not have enough fuel to taxi to the Fuel barge when the engines stopped. Other Cats returning usually took only enough fuel to get them back to their Base.

West Bay Marine Section personnel looked on themselves as an independent Unit resisting any attempt to have them attend the once a month CO's Parade. RAAF Base Truscott was located some miles inland from the coast where they had their camp. Arrival of a Cat usually provided the excuse to miss the Parade, or the need to carry out servicing and repairs to their boats often fell on the day of the Parade. M.S. usual mode of dress was a hat and perhaps sandals didn't endear them to the Base. A certain W.O. discipline gave notice that boots must be worn but when the same WO requested to be taken out to a visiting RAN vessel he was somewhat taken a back when the RAN Officer would not allow him aboard until he removed his offending boots. The foot wear edict was rescinded.

The Marine Section consisted of one Officer, three Sergeants, twenty "Other Ranks", five steel, 60foot barges, with two Ford V8 motors, two Dumb barges, two Work Boats (16ft) with Chrysler 6 cylinder motors, one Crash Boat, with two Chrysler motors, two dinghys, and one Fuel Barge powered by a Ford V8. All the boats had to be maintained with painting carried out a low tide.

Many of the Aborigines from the Drysdale Mission were employed on the Base and occasionally one or two would visit the MS camp. They usually borrowed a fishing line and go off but always returned with catch for the entire Unit. They would always return the line minus the hook, but all the fish had a hole through the head. Every six weeks the Marine Section would return about forty of the Aborigines back to the Mission and bring back another group.

The RAAF Radar unit ceased operating at the Mission so the M.S. transported the equipment and the personnel back to West Bay where trucks picked them up and dropped them off at their new location near the strip.

A Salvation Army Officer had utility van, which he used to visit each section at Truscott, provided numerous items and cool drinks as well as writing materials. On occasions the M.S. landing barge would take his utility van to the Radar Units on off shore islands.



Catalina aircraft frequently staged through West Bay on their way to far off Japanese Bases in the Dutch East Indies. Others running low on fuel would land and only take on enough fuel to return to their own Base. (G. Churchill)



A Work Boat coming along side a Catalina at the request of the aircraft Captain. Great care was needed so as not to cause any hull damage to an aircraft.

(G. Churchill)



FLGOFF Stuart was one of the Officers Commanding the West Bay Marine Section. One of the main attributes of the Men of the M.S. was self reliance, for they worked in a Team dependent on personal skill in handling and operating boats. (Norm Greave)



West Bay as it is now, not the bustling with activity (like war time) when a ship was in the Bay being unloaded. In the trees (top left) was where this very independent group had their small compact settlement. They created their own life style in between duties. (Norm Greaves)



Much to the amazement of the Commanding Officer of the Main Base was the construction of the workshop and the Control Tower by the M.S. Personnel, for they possessed many skills under the guidance of good leadership. (Norm Greaves)



To indicate the size of the operation here in West Bay, the "Admiral Chase" brought in 12,000 drums of aviation fuel, which had to be manually handled and brought ashore on Barges. When that exercise was completed 12,000 empty drums had to be returned to the ship. In the background is part of the stockpile of empty drums. (Norm Greaves)



Another of the Royal Australian Navy Boats at West Bay was q18 "Coongoola", a 60 foot vessel, whose Skipper was Lt. Bill Archer. (Norm Greaves)



924 "Air Cloud" was one of the high speed Air Sea Rescue Boats, supplied under the American "Lend Lease" arrangements, and operated by the RAN. A number of these "Air Boats" saw service at West Bay as well as in New Guinea. Note (in 1949 "Air Cloud" became 02.103 in the Marine Section) (G. Sharwin)



There was a good working relationship between the RAN A.S.R. Boat Crews and the Marine Section. Here Marine Section Personnel take a taxi ride service on "Air Sailor" from the Supply ship to shore. (G. Churchill)



Here in RAAF Type 02.4 (Dec1944) was former RAN 926, with shade awnings and air flow canvas funnelled air through the boat. (G.Churchill)



The West Bay jetty was another asset built by the Marine Section, & at high tide part of it is under water. Off shore the boats are on moorings. (N.Greaves)



02.4 was used as an Air Sea Rescue Boat in West Bay.

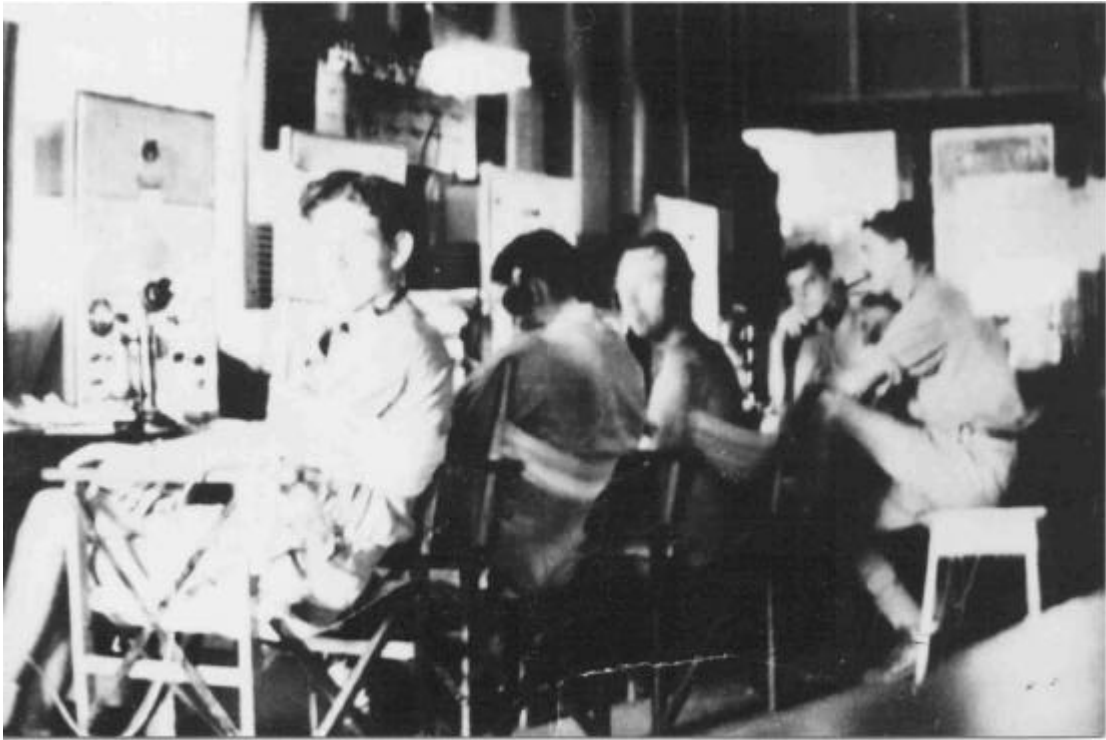
(Norm Greaves)



017.29 was one of the important boats operating at West Bay. As her dinghy is not on top of the wheelhouse, and the boat was on a mooring, the Crew were probably ashore.
(N. Greaves)



Crew members of 017.29 are Bill Collier (FMBC) Eric McNabb, (WTOP) and Bill Rowden, (Coxswain)
(N. Greaves)



Some Wireless Operators monitored Japanese signals while others kept watch for emergency signals from Allied aircraft.
(Eric McNabb)

Two types of Landing Barges operated at West Bay, one had its own engines while the other a Dumb Barge had to be towed by a Work Boat. The RAAF Base trucks were often carried out to the supply ship on a Barge so that equipment could be loaded directly onto them. Back at the shore the trucks drove directly off and went directly to the Main Base on the newly constructed road.
(Norm Greaves)

Catalina aircraft did land at West Bay other than going on missions, for they brought in a variety of stores and personnel. An Air Sea Rescue boat was in West Bay in case of emergency calls from incoming aircraft, which would be monitored by the Radar Unit and Wireless Unit on the main Base.

Norm Greaves has the dubious honour of being at West Bay longer than any other RAAF person until his posting to No.82 OBU, then located at Crawley Bay on the Swan River, some two miles from the City of Perth.

It was at Crawley Bay that Norm Greaves met the returning Australian Prisoners of War, who, having made some recovery from years of torment and hideous treatment by the Japanese, finally arrived home. Hollywood Hospital was only a short ambulance ride from the Catalina Base so these men came under the care of the Service Nurses and Doctors within a few minutes of landing.

QANTAS Catalinas making the very long and dangerous return flights from Crawley Bay to Ceylon were also based on the Swan River in the next bay.

With the war over, came Norm Greaves discharge from the Royal Australian Air Force in June 1946.

Sergeant Eric N. McNabb, a Radio Operator, was posted to RAAF Truscott during 1945 and part of his duties was as Radio Operator on 017.29 with the Marine Section in West Bay. Three of the RAN Air Sea Rescue Boats, 924 "Air Cloud", "Air Mist" and 926 "Air Sailor" also operated in this locality. During that period the Marine Section Officer was FLGOFF Stewart Brownson.

Eric recalled how on occasions the Base Medical Officer would be called out at night on a "mercy mission" to attend a difficult birth or some one sick at Drysdale Aboriginal Mission. His mode of transport was by 017.29 so the Marine Section Crew would be alerted and have the boat ready for departure by the time the Doctor arrived.

It was through the skill of the Coxswain Eddie Rowden that 017.29 could wend its way up the boulder strewn King Edward River during the night to the boat landing. The Mission truck would meet them there and take the Doctor over the remaining distance. During the regular visits to the Mission, a group of Aboriginals, who had been working at the RAAF Base, would be exchanged for another group. This rotation of Mission people gave the Aboriginals an opportunity to work on the Base and be paid by the RAAF.

One of the young Spitfire Pilots reported seeing two luggers and a building in a hidden creek off Vansittart Bay so 017.29 with FLGOFF Stewart Brownson, Eddie Rowden, FMBC Bill Collier and Eric McNabb set out to investigate.

Because of the difficulty of locating the hidden creek Eric radioed the Base to get more precise directions. Eventually they found the luggers with their rotten hulls and the building with photographs of Japanese scattered about. It was clearly evident that the area had been deserted for a long time. That night 017.29 lay along side "Air Sailor" on her permanent mooring, for she was stationed in the Bay, and shared yarns and a meal. Next morning returned to West Bay. Perhaps the "investigators" were somewhat disappointed. What personal and private thoughts must they each had about the deserted base is not recorded.

The Marine Section Boats and their Crews had many and regular duties other than carrying equipment, stores etc from ships to shore. Visiting isolated RAAF Radar Units on remote islands to keep them supplied with rations, fresh water, mail and equipment was a very important role as well as carrying relief personnel.

Montalivet Island

No.344 RAAF Radar Unit

When the decision was made to disband this Radar Unit on Montalivet Island the three West Bay Marine Section boats, 018.11 Landing Barge, 015.11 and 017.29 were sent to evacuate the RAAF Personnel.

Once there all the secret equipment was evenly distributed on the three boats as well as the Unit Members but leaving behind the buildings. The boat Crews were now to experience the culinary delights of the Island Cook, or as the Boat Crews would refer to him later as the "Chef". His ability to convert the usual RAAF provisions into something worthy to accompany the local seafoods was a sight to behold and enjoy. Eric and his fellow Crew Members all agreed that in their years in the RAAF they had never before experienced such expertise.

Japanese Surrender.

017.29 happened to be anchored in King Edward River near the Drysdale Mission Landing, with the Communications Radio switched to the external speaker, when the official announcement was broadcast. On the confines of the boat there was great jubilation, for some of the Crew had been in the RAAF since the outbreak of the war. Shortly afterwards the Mission truck came to a skidding halt with the horn blowing and out jumped the Mission Brother with an invitation to a special dinner to commemorate the occasion in this most isolated community in the Kimberlies.

Fine wines from the New Norcia Monastery accompanied the excellently prepared food, and good fellowship. By the time the Crew had to depart and negotiate the hazards of the King Edward River the prowess of the Coxswain, Eddie Rowden, was stretched to the maximum and proved a little venturesome.

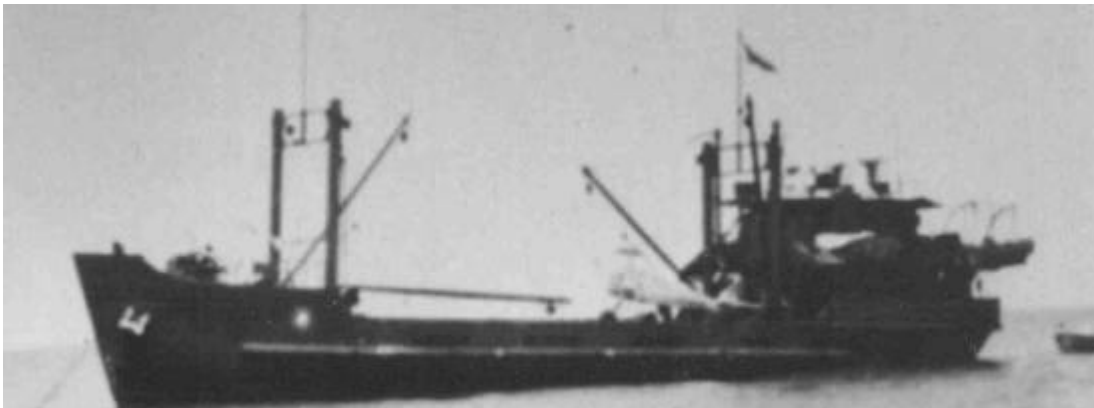
Final Dine in Night

A great deal of food planning, which necessitated using Mess Funds to fly in delicacies to accompany the excellent sea foods of the region, and pooling of beer rations would ensure a gala night. To many of the men present, this night would be the last time many would ever see each other, after all the trials and tribulations of living together in this Kimberly region. Most would disperse to far flung reaches of this huge continent.

Many of the men had spent a great deal of their Service life at this remote Base and many friendships had evolved. Reliance on one and others skills was essential, especially in this small Marine Section, and the continued flow of supplies for the successful function of the Truscott Base.

Fighter Aircraft were based there while bombers and Flying Boats staged through on their way to attack the vast number of Japanese Bases.

The Marine Section Boats and their Crews played a vital role in maintaining the supplies so essential in an Operational Base Unit. Their contribution has been largely overlooked in the passage of time but the Men of West Bay are able to look back with pride for the part they played in the conflict.



06.16 was one of the new Marine Section Supply vessels that operated around northern Australia, New Guinea and later Boreno. On deck can be seen VH ASA, Tiger Moth, (a light training aircraft) belonging to Rev. Vic Petersen, the popular Salvation Army Officer, who had been forced down in a remote locality. The Skipper of 06.16 FLGOFF Rhodes had willingly agreed to rescue the "Tiger".
(G.Churchill)

No.58 Operational Base Unit**RAAF Base Truscott**

Selected Monthly Movements taken from Unit Records:

December 1944

34 Catalina Flying Boats refuelled by West Bay Marine Section before going on to attack far away Japanese targets.

S.S."San Raphael" brought supplies and 10,000 drums of aviation fuel for No. 58 OBU.

The West Bay Marine Section, using their Landing Barges and Dumb Barges (non motorised) towed by Work Boats, brought ashore the total cargo.

February 1945

95 Catalina Flying Boats staged through West Bay with all requiring assistance by the Marine Section. This could also include taking Crews ashore for added Briefing etc. then returning them to the aircraft.

S.S."Edna" brought supplies and 7,000 drums of aviation fuel.

1945

Ships continued to deliver vast quantities of fuel so necessary for staging Mitchell and Liberator Bombers as well as Defensive Spitfires.

In July a record was set when the S.S."Admiral Chase" arrived with 12,000 drums of fuel.

Not only did the Marine Section have to deliver all this fuel ashore, but when they had completed this task they then had to man handle 12,000 empty drums and carry them back to the waiting ship. This was completed in 16 days.

November 1945

M.V."Koolinda" brought in supplies for the Drysdale River Mission. This cargo was also delivered by the Marine Section.

M.V."Koolinda" was then loaded with AWC equipment and Base Personnel all bound for Fremantle.

No. 58 OBU Truscott was gradually being wound down as the number of RAAF Personnel were posted away.

RAAF Doctor's Gully

Darwin

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 was followed by the defeat of Singapore, and then Darwin was attacked and bombed on 19 February 1942. In one hour that raid by Japanese carrier aircraft and land based bombers caused severe structural damage, sank eight ships, damaged others, and killed 243 people and wounded 300 more. The Japanese Task Force was led and planned by the same Officers that devastated Pearl Harbour.

The treat of invasion was considered likely by the defenders, but its initial objective for the Japanese was to thwart any possible intervention during the imminent occupation of the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).

Darwin would suffer more than fifty Japanese bombing raids as well as many reconnaissance incursions.

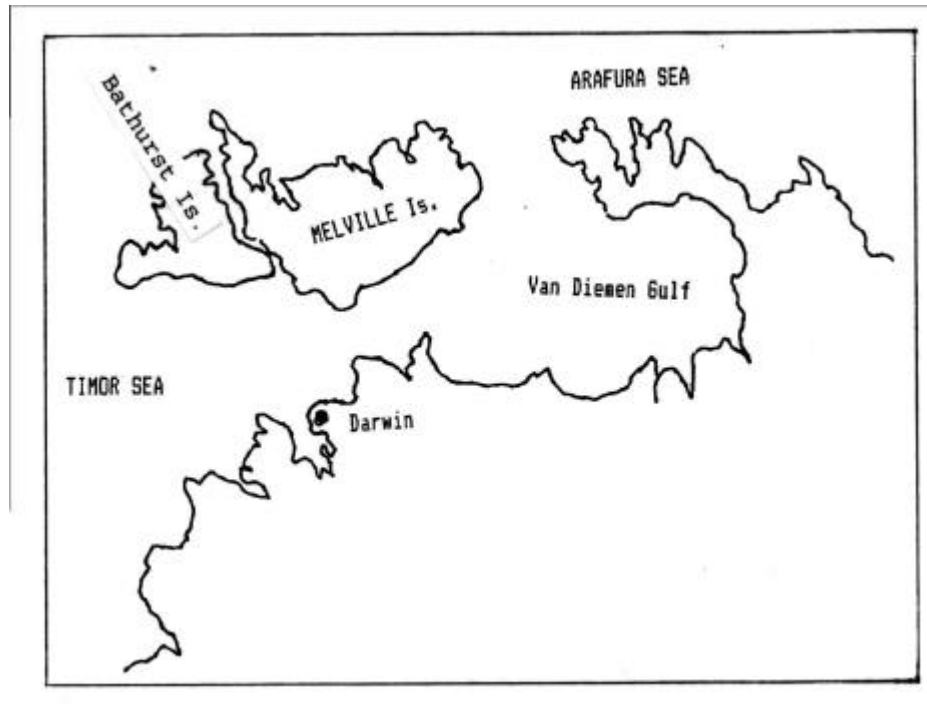
From this period onward airfields and airstrips were constructed for both the defence of Australia and the gradual development of an offensive capability against the Japanese targets.

Before the arrival of the Catalina Flying Boat Squadrons, the RAAF Marine Section Boats and Personnel had to be in place along with the facilities and supplies.

Marine Section Workshop was established to service and modify a variety of boats taken over by the RAAF. Pearling Luggers had new motors installed and fitted out, then with RAAF Crews, commenced ferrying supplies, equipment and personnel to outlying Units. As RAAF Radar Units were trained and equipped they had to be transported to remote bays and outlying islands.

The arrival of the large sailing Ketch 06.11 "Yalata" became well known to the Radar Units of the region for not only did she carry the whole Units to their allotted location, but to continually keep them supplied with provisions, personnel being rotated, and the delivery of personal letter from home. The importance of the role played by these large sailing vessel, with their young RAAF Crews is unrecorded and consequently unknown to not only the general population, but also other sections of the Royal Australian Air Force.

With the construction of air fields along the vast northern coast line, Catalina aircraft could staged through and refuelled at far away places such as, RAAF Truscott in the Kimberlies, by the Marine Section Personnel in West Bay. This Base was constructed by a MWS (Mobile Works Squadron) that was transported ashore from a ship off shore, by Marine Section men operating Landing Barges and Dumb Barges hauled by Work Boats.



This mosaic was prepared by the Australian Institute of Cartographers Northern Territory and supplied by the Northern Territory Department of Lands and Housing.



The Port of Darwin was a very important distribution centre for all essential necessities to sustain men in remote Bases and small Units. Materials, fuel, ammunition, food and equipment brought from southern ports and countries from around the world ending in Darwin.



Catalina Flying Boats based in Darwin lay at their moorings off Dr's Gully. From here they ranged far and wide in their strikes against Japanese Bases and Ports from where they exported vital minerals and oil to the factories in Japan. The marine Section played a vital role sat this Base.



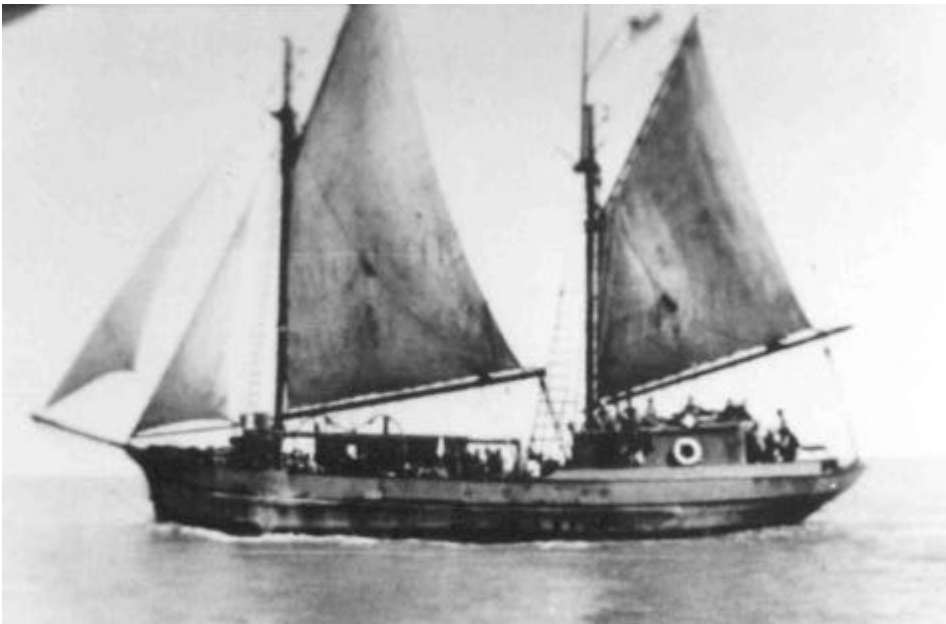
S Catalina, having just had an important servicing is about to enter the water along side the Doctor's Gully Marine Section jetty. (Harry Wortley)



When the tide is in, the Marine Section Boats are able to moor along side the Unit's jetty, while other boats are at their mooring well out from the beach. Dr's gully was a very important Base for the wide variety of boat Types that serviced the large number of RAAF Radar Units in the region. (Harry Wortley)



Like all Marine Section Workshops, the skilled men, who worked there, also made it possible for the boats based there, and boats passing through, to maintain the vital links to remote units. All boats require regular and sometimes emergency servicing and essential maintenance that cannot be done by Boat Crews themselves while at sea. (H,Wortley)



The Ketch 06.11 "Yalata" operated out of Darwin keeping the Radar Units supplied after transporting whole Units, (No.39, 46, 60, & 61) including the then secret equipment, tents, generating gear, food and every item so essential for a small Unit to operate for long periods.
(Morrie Fenton, Radar & Author)



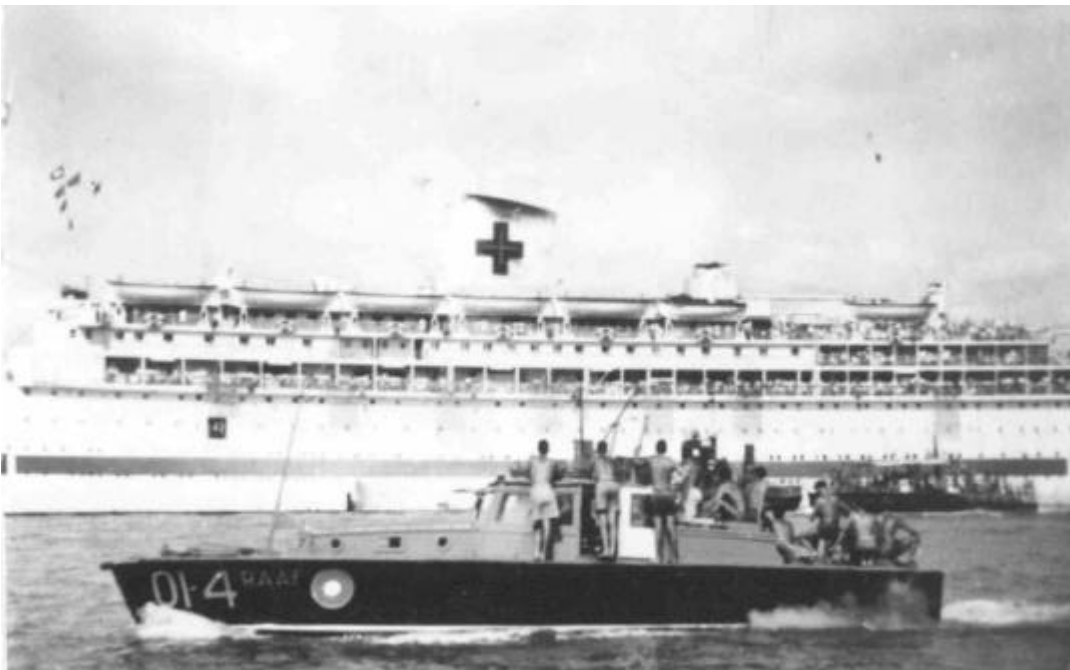
Marine Section Work Boat towing a Catalina into under go an important engine servicing in the Base Workshop where RAAF Ground Crews will work round the clock to have it ready for a mission.
(Reg Blower)



Marine Section Fuel Barges and their skilled Crews needed the utmost care, especially in strong winds and counter currents when bringing their boats near the hulls that could easily damaged,
(George Churchill)



One of the Darwin Catalinas had to make a rendezvous with HMS "Telemachus", a British submarine, to collect LTCDR Meadows, the Engineering Officer, to have urgent medical attention done in Darwin Hospital.
(Ales Cumming Catalina Flight Engineer)



Hospital Ship "Oranji" loaded with Australian ex POW.s approaching Darwin, received a rousing welcome from the Marine Section 01.4 Boat loaded with Personnel, from the Base.
(Reg Blower)

All construction materials, bulldozers, bitumen, Diesel and Aviation fuel, food and every conceivable item to set up an OBU (Operation Base Unit) were brought ashore by the RAAF Marine Section.

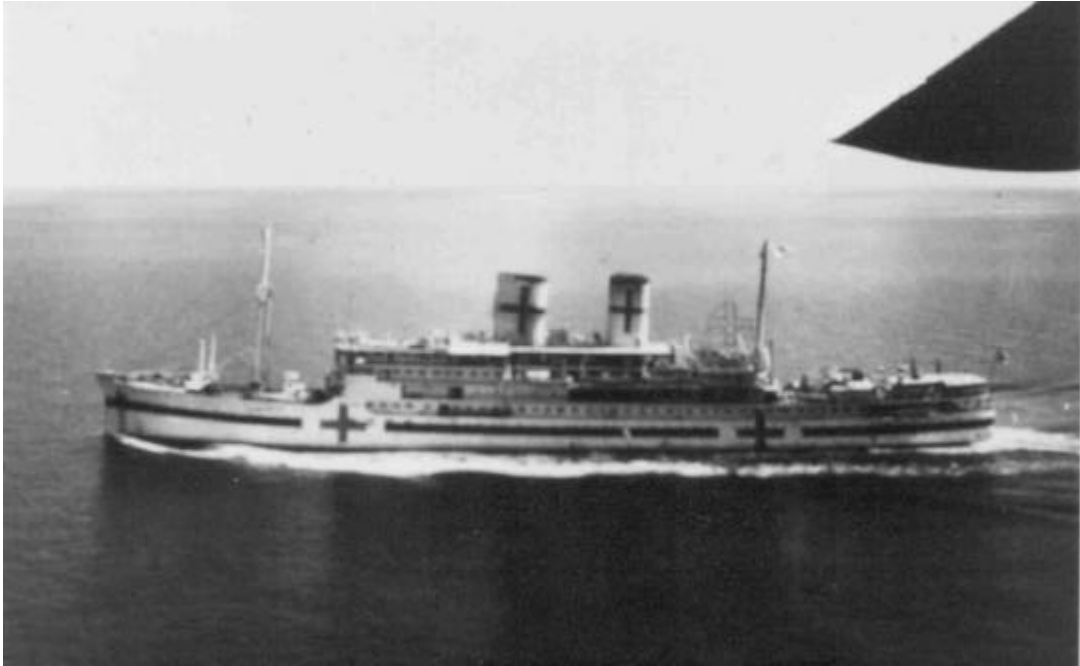
Crews at West Bay also manned Refueling Barges, Crash Boats and Air Sea Rescue Boats to service the staging Cats on their very long bombing missions in the Japanese held Bases in the Dutch East Indies. These Marine Section men operated in a remote place, lived in primitive conditions, and poor and mundane food rations, yet they had high moral based on mate ship and ready acceptance of war time conditions. Talk to these men now fifty years on and they will readily relate the friendships and self created fun.

Bob Sweetman arrived in Darwin as an eighteen year old straight from RAAF Rathmines Training School and was soon operating as the Coxswain on a Refuelling Barge. Mariner, Sunderland and Catalina flying boats were supplied with high octane fuel as was the RAN Torpedo Boats and RAN Air Sea Rescue Boats. Strict procedures in operating a Refueling Barge had to be adopted for any carelessness could have dire consequences for the Crew as well as the valuable aircraft.

Like all Base Catalina Squadrons the Air Crews depended upon the Marine Section boats and crews operating in a multitude of roles. Operating the Bomb Scows so that mines, and bombs (some torpedoes had been launched from Cats.) could be loaded, Work Boats to carry Air Crews to their aircraft, Crash Boats to clear debris from the take off path, lay flare paths and maintain them during night flying, have Crash Boats on station during take off, and being there when aircraft were returning from a Mission. On many occasions returning aircraft could be damaged, or had injured airmen requiring immediate medical attention. Crash boats accompany these aircraft to render towing assistance to moorings if necessary, or, to be immediately along side the hull to collect wounded. This close liaison between Air Crews and the Marine Section crews was a matter of friendship and pride in their professional expertise.

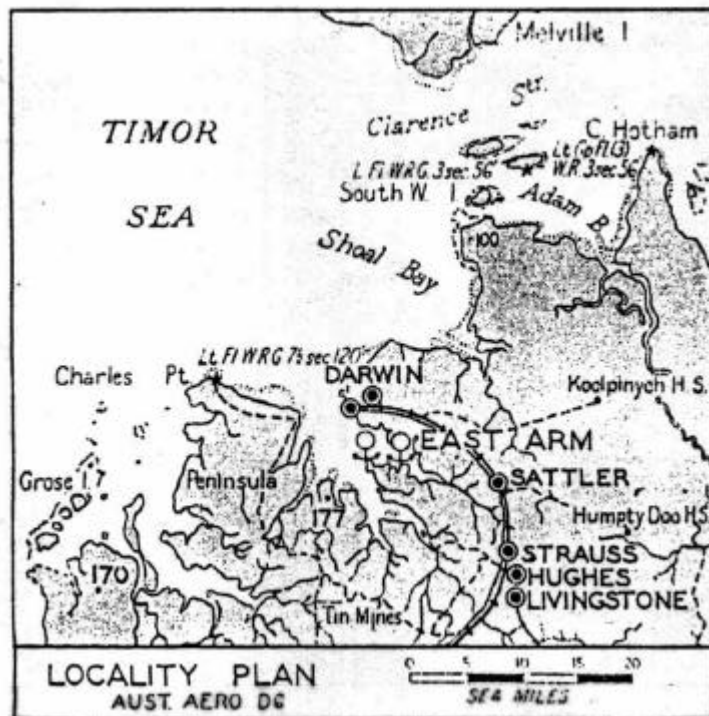
The Marine Section in Darwin must have had a great many men pass through this Base during the war years for from there they would often be posted to other newly formed Sections in New Guinea or to an established OBU. Skilled tradesmen, in many musterings, manned the Marine Section Workshops to keep not only their own boats in tip top condition, but service the wide range of boats that operated from this main supply distribution centre of Darwin. A continuous flow of Liberty Ships, small and large Cargo ships brought supplies and armaments to this very important Northern Harbour so essential in maintaining pressure on a very determined aggressor

Australian Servicemen usually portray their individual contribution during those dark days of conflict in a casual and laconic manner as "no big deal!" Beneath this mask lie their self esteem and a pride that is evident when they meet with their mates with whom they shared those far off days in the RAAF Marine Section.



This was a Japanese Hospital Ship located by a Darwin Catalina, with the Flight Engineer Alex Cumming onboard. No sign of passengers was evident as the Catalina circled the ship.

(Alex Cumming)



After the surrender by the Japanese, Coxswain Bob Sweetman would be kept busy with the constant flow of Flying Boats arriving, with men just released from the hell hole Prisoner of War Camps operated by the Japanese. Hospital Ships like the "Oranji" would pass through Darwin and the Marine Section Boats like 01.4 crowded with Crews would sail out and greet these returning ex Prisoners of War.

Bob Sweetman, Coxswain would remain in Doctor's Gully well into 1946 for there was still many tasks to be performed with Bases closed. Using a Marine Section Landing Barge Bob and his Crew had to go to the off shore islands and bring back equipment and materials for disposal or to be returned to Official Stores.

This Doctor's Gully Marine Section would remain operational in the early Post War years.

Air Sea Rescue Flights

Also located in Darwin was No.112 Flight Catalinas, whose role was Air Sea Rescue of downed aircraft Air Crews, who were far beyond the assistance of Marine Section Boats. These "Cats" were frequently on patrol in the flight path of Allied Bombers and Fighter Escort Squadrons attacking Japanese installations. Landing in heavy seas or regions close to enemy Bases was often necessary and required a great deal of professional skill. It was comforting to attacking aircraft Air Crews to know that these ASR Flights were out over these wide expanses of ocean.

Perhaps in some archive the record of those rescues has been filed away waiting for some one to unearth them.

Flare Paths

Flare paths had to be provided for Flying Boat Squadrons and ASR Flights and the provider in this role was the Marine Section Personnel. The Darwin Base the flight path had to be laid directly into wind so any change in wind direction meant the flare path had to be altered. Eight (8) dinghys had to be anchored in line at the prescribed distance apart while at the far end of the flare path another dinghy with a light had to be anchored on the starboard side. These battery operated lights let the Pilots know the direction to land and the width of the flare path.

Crash Boat and Crew had to be ready in their craft, with engines running when aircraft were approaching so that they could lend assistance to taxiing flying boats, or in case of a sudden emergency.

06.10 "Waimana"

Three Masted Schooner

06.10 "Waimana" sailed from South Australia to Geelong and was fitted out there and manned by a RAAF Marine Section Crew. In company with the Ketches 06.9 "Betty Joan" and 06.08 "Ena" they sailed for New Guinea in December 1943.

"Waimana" carried .5 Browning machine guns mounted on tripods with one on the bow and the other on the stern. The Crew comprised the Captain, First Mate, Wireless Operator, two Fitters and four Motor Boat Crew. Her sails were used whenever the winds were favourable as well as the kerosene motors. On arrival in Milne Bay the Marine Section Base Workshop with two General Motors Grey two stroke Diesels would replace these old motors. The deck motor was a single cylinder kerosene motor to power the winches and anchor. An APU motor was used to recharge the bank of batteries used for lighting.

"Waimana" carried supplies, equipment as well as a complete RAAF Radar Unit, including all personnel to a remote island or a New Guinea mainland location. This exercise was carried out on many occasions as this Branch of the RAAF expanded. "Waimana" operated from Port Moresby, from Milne Bay, then all around the New Guinea coast as far as Aitape, across to New Britain and to Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands.

Accommodation for the Crew:

_____The Captain, First Mate and Wireless Operator shared the aft cabin while the rest of the Crew bunked in the fo'c'sle (forecastle), which was cramped and lacking in through ventilation. It was quite common to wake during the night and discover large rats crawling across the bunks. When ever possible the deck, with a canvas awning suspended overhead, was preferred for sleeping.

Meals were prepared in a midship galley on a fuel stove, which had been converted to function using diesel but during rough weather the cook had to be very careful with this stove. Food away from a Base or port usually consisted of dried potatoes, cabbage, egg powder, bully beef and baked beans. Supplementing these basics was usually by catching fish and trading with villagers for yams and fruits.

Ron McGraw (135523) joined the RAAF in June 1943, having been rejected previously because of a sinus problem. He completed a Fitters Course at Geelong then went to Rathmines to do a Seamanship Course. With those two courses behind him Ron was then posted to Ultimo Technical College to undergo a three month course on petrol and diesel motors. Jervis Bay Marine Section was his first assignment where he operated on a Torpedo Recovery Boat collecting dummy torpedoes dropped by Beaufort Bombers trainee crews.



The very large Schooner 06.10 "Waimana" crewed by Marine Section personnel, departing Milne Bay under both power and sail, bound for RAAF Units in remote bays and islands.

Note: A lookout Crewman is perched high on the forward spreader.
(Ron Mc Graw)



Well tanned Crew of "Waimana" take time out for this photograph, on their way up the east coast of New Guinea.

Back) Joe Maddox, Captain FLTLT Tate, Jack Woodward, Wireless Op. Jack Dalton, Front. Bill Corbett, Nick Carter, Ron McGraw, & Roy Smith.
(Ron McGraw)



Members of the Crew do a spot of bargaining with the locals at Bogagin Mission, to supplement RAAF rations.

(Ron McGraw)



“Waimana” delivering a cargo into Tufi. The US Navy had a secret Motor Torpedo Boat Base there in 1942 but were now located north of New Guinea.

(Ron McGraw)

A sudden transfer to Milne Bay Marine Section in June 1944 found him on a Refueling Barge with the task of taking it to the new Marine Section at Madang. This long voyage up the east coast of New Guinea, then along the north coast to Madang, was under tow with the "Waimana" travelling by day then anchoring for the night. While in Madang he joined the "Waimana" as a member of the Crew and would remain on board for the following sixteen months. This 150 foot three masted Schooner with a draft of only seven foot could negotiate the reef strewn waters of New Guinea and the off shore islands.

Ship's Crew

Skipper	FLTLT Tate (until posted home)
Skipper	Warrant Officer Eric Payne
Fitter	"Pop" Preistley
Fitter	Ron McGraw
Wireless Op.	Jack Woodward
Wireless Op.	Wally Cridge
Crew	Jim Short
Crew	Nic Carter
Crew	Sid Franklin
Crew	Peter Freeburn

The usual dress on board was only shorts and badges of Rank were not worn.

The engine room was located aft below the Captain's Cabin and entry was by very steep steps. With two General Motors Diesel two stroke engines running it was incredibly noisy and during rough weather the propellers would come out of the water causing the engines to race momentarily until the governors could operate.

Pop Preistly and Ron then worked a six hour shift without the added comfort of modern day sound reducing ear protectors.

For the following six months "Waimana" would return to Milne Bay from Madang on a number of occasions after delivering cargoes to the ports of Lae, Cape Ward Hunt, Poopatari and Chad Bay. On return from Milne Bay stopping at Doguia Anasari Harbour, Buna, Finchaven and Reiss Point Madang.

A cargo was loaded for Momoto in Los Negros Island, which entailed a long voyage across the Bismark Sea, and arrived to be welcomed with an air raid alert. There a group of American sailors came aboard the "Waimana" and asked permission to have a look over her for they found it hard to believe that a three masted ship of another era, flying a RAAF Ensign, was still operating. In appreciation they invited the "Waimana" Crew onboard their 50 foot Air Sea Rescue Boat for a high speed trip around Seadler Harbour. Their boat was powered by V16 Hall Scott Motors and on board they even had an Operating Theatre.



Skipper of "Waimana"
Ernie Paying making an
acquaintance with a
child at the Mukowa
Mission. (Ron McGraw)



Jack Woodward,
Wireless Operator on
"Waimana" managed
to combine a little
exploring while in
Tufi. (Ron McGraw)

Departure from Momoto and bound for the long haul back to Port Moresby where they collected a cargo of two hundred and fifty tons of bombs. While on the way back to Milne Bay they ran aground on a reef at Hula near Hood Point during the night. Next day the Crew set about to free themselves and by using a dinghy, found a passage through the reef. With engines running for three hours the bilge was finally cleared of water and they completed the trip to Milne Bay. Three days later after a severe storm they arrive at Toofe. During the previous night their ship passed over an area in the sea glowing patches on the surface of the sea like neon lights going on and off. (later, informed that it was an under water volcanic eruption!)

Early in February 1945 Ron contracted Dengue Fever while in Madang and was admitted to 2MRS RAAF Hospital where he spent twelve days recovering. Mean while "Waimana" left Madang bound for Milne Bay where Ron was reunited with his shipmates after a trip in a DC3. Ron was again admitted to hospital for the removal of a piece of steel from his eye. A few days later the wet season commenced and in one three day period 60 inches of rain fell. After operating out of Milne Bay for the remainder of March 1945 "Waimana" returned to Madang.

After a short trip to Alexhaven "Waimana" lay at anchor with engine trouble on 4 May 1945. Two days later news was broadcast that the war in Europe had finished (6 May) so all the ships in Madang Harbour fired their guns and sounded sirens and horns. Ron attended a Service in the RAAF Memorial Chapel at Northern Command Headquarters. How long would the war here in the Pacific continue was on everyone's mind?

Fierce fighting against the Japanese was still taking place a short distance away at Wewak with continuous bombing raids by RAAF planes and bombardment by RAN ships.

Repairs to "Waimana" were soon completed after the Navy Repair Ship "Whampu" repaired the main shaft. Soon afterwards "Waimana" set sail for Jacquinot Bay on the south coast of New Britain. Heavy seas were encountered in Vitiaz Strait so the ship took shelter in Dorfer Bay and several other locations and finally arrived after ten days.

With a load of bombs onboard the return voyage to Madang was hazardous because of fierce storms and mountainous seas. A ship's lifeboat was damaged and davits smashed as well as the mainsail, mizzen and staysails were blown out.

From Madang to Aitape with a load of bombs was the next voyage, but because off shore islands were still in Japanese hands the "Waimana" kept out beyond the range of their 75 mm guns. Wewak was passed during the night and Aitape appeared the following morning. Because no wharfs or jetties were there the bombs had to hoist up out of the hold and lowered into landing barges. With the ship and landing barge rolling in the swell Ron, who was operating the winches, found it difficult to judge the timing of lowering a sling of bombs.

When the opportunity came Ron paid a visit to the airstrip to make a surprise visit to No.100 Squadron to see his brother, Keith. Beaufort Bombers were continually taking off to bomb Wewak. Keith spent a day on "Waimana" so he had a few yarns to spin back at the Squadron about his day on a large sailing Schooner.

Three day later, on 3 July 1945, "Waimana" was back in Madang. On 18 July the long voyage back to Port Moresby commenced but storms along the way forced them to take refuge in a number of ports and bays. At Milne Bay Ron had to carry out repairs to the stern gland and propeller by diving down without diving gear. One of the Crew stood guard with a 303 rifle in case of sharks. On 11 August news of Japan's offer of surrender was announced but it wasn't until the 15 August that the war in the Pacific had ended.

For many days it rained and rained until on the 26 August 1945 "Waimana" departed Milne Bay and finally arrived in Port Moresby on 29 August 1945.

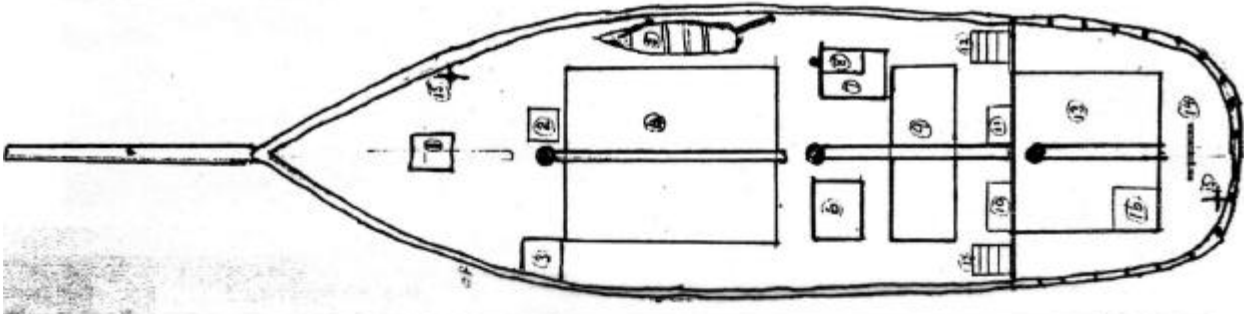
While "Waimana" was on the slip Keith joined a group of 20 for a test flight of 90minutes on a RAAF Sunderland Flying Boat. A steep dive in this large aircraft had the passengers wondering what was going on until the pilot pulled out low over the sea. A visit to the RAAF Dentist and RAAF Doctor for minor attention was followed Ron taking a new RAAF Crash Boat for a test run. A day out sailing on a Marine Section Whaler reminded Ron of his time at Rathmines.

"Waimana" lay at anchor in the harbour looking deserted for she would not be returning south but was waiting disposal. She had carried her RAAF Crews safely through raging storms and dangerous waters, with the ever present possibility of being bombed or shot up by the Japanese. What an unfitting reward for such faithful service.

Ron McCraw received a posting to Port Moresby on the 30 September and one of his first duties was doing repairs to 02.7 Crash Boat.

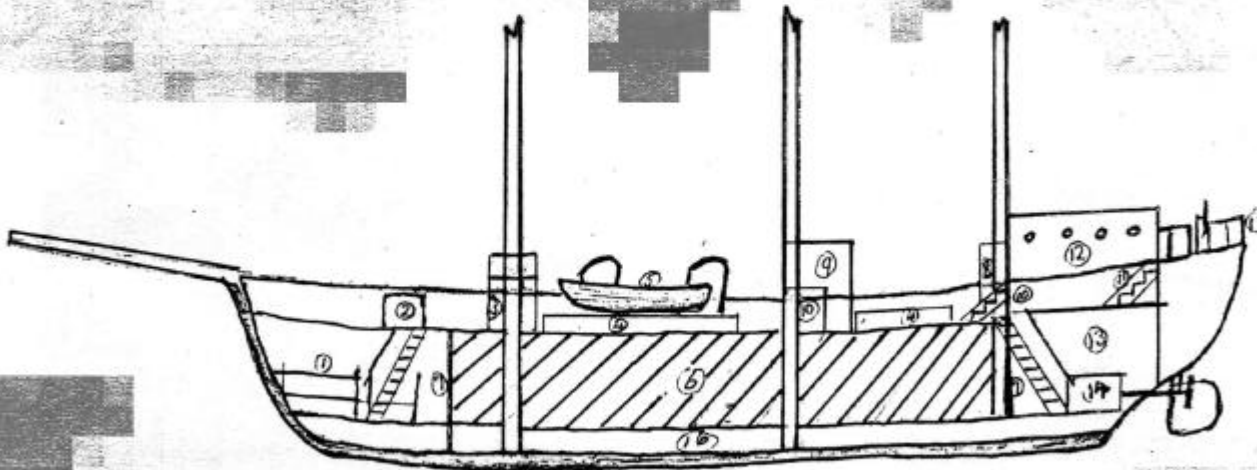
Finally on 24 October 1945 Ron boarded a Sunderland for Cairns, and from there was posted to Rose Bay Flying Boat Base where he entered hospital with Malaria. In May 1946 Ron was Discharged.

Ron has fond memories of his time on "Waimana" and especially the mateship that developed between members of the Crew with every one pulling their weight to get the job done. There were often trying conditions but they are off set by the memories of beautiful places, the kindly Villagers with whom they traded and visited.



- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Entry to forecastle. | 10. Fuel Tank |
| 2. Kerosene deck motor | 11. Entry to engine room |
| 3. Toilet | 12. Stairs to upper deck |
| 4. Hatch cover | 13. Captain's cabin + First mate and Wireless Operator. |
| 5. Life boat | 14. Wheel |
| 6. Fresh water tank | 15. .5 Browning machine guns |
| 7. Galley | 16. Radio room. |
| 9. Hatch cover | |

Overall length 152 feet
Draught 7 feet



- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Forecastle | 10. Water tank |
| 2. Entry | 11. Steps to Captain's Cabin |
| 3. Toilet | 12. Capt. Ist Mate & Radio Op. |
| 4. Hatch covers | 13. Engine room |
| 5. Life boat | 14. Twin Grey, 2 stroke Marine Diesel engines |
| 6. Cargo area | 15. Railing round upper deck |
| 7. Bulkhead | 16. Bilge |
| 8. Entry to engine room | |
| 9. Galley | |

(Drawn from memory in 1996 by Ron McGraw, ex Crewman.)

Ron also recalled how one of their Crew, Wal Cridge, returned to New Guinea after the war and spent many years there on a plantation. There he adopted a native boy and sent him to Australia to be educated and he now holds a responsible position in the Public Service.

On one occasion when "Waimana" was motoring into Milne Bay, and heading for the Marine Section during very heavy rain and poor visibility, the lookout shouted.

"There's a jetty ahead!" Ron immediately dived down into the engine room and selected reverse just as "Waimana" struck the Navy Jetty. It was demolished like a pack of cards resulting in only minor damage to the vessel.

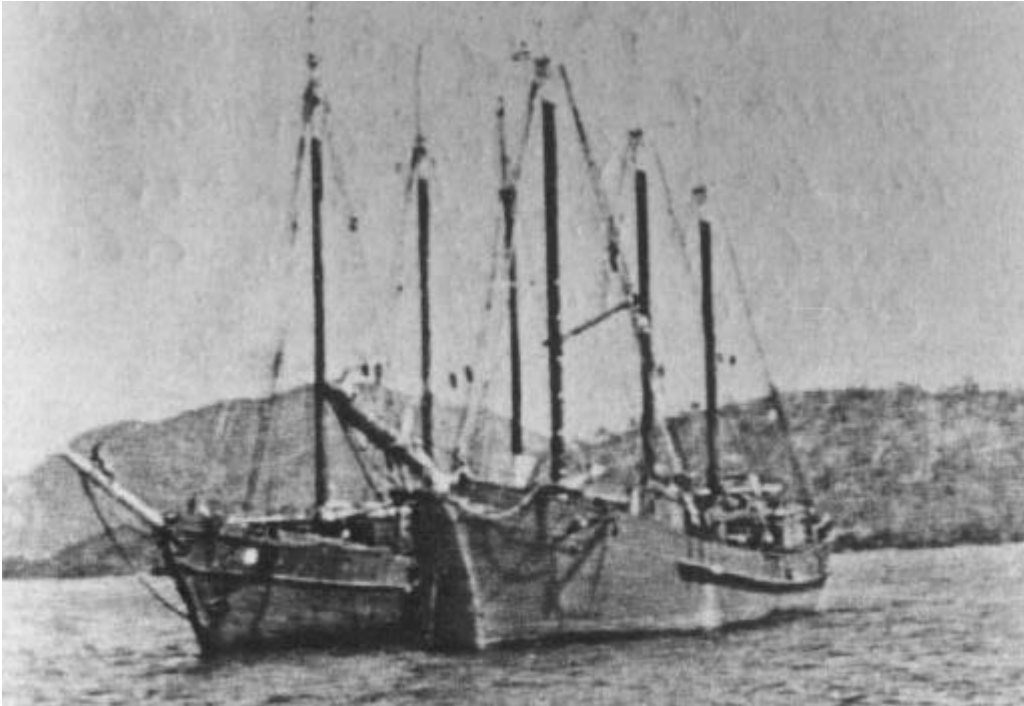
Food, or the lack of variety, was some times supplemented by trailing a long telephone cable, with a large hook draped in red bunting, over the stern. Often this resulted in hooking a large Kingfish, which had to be brought onboard smartly before sharks could make a claim. A frequent technique of catching fish was with the aide of an army hand grenade tossed from the ship's dinghy along side a reef.

Ron adopted a method of doing his clothes washing by towing it astern of the ship for an hour or so. One young Air Crew Member, while on his way to America in a troop ship, tried this method, but to his utter dismay the flimsy rope broke and he parted with all his shirts and under gear. He was virtually left with what he was wearing.

One high light Ron also recalled was the voyage in 1945, when 06.10 "Waimana" was sent to Manus Island in the Admiralty Islands with a much needed cargo. After the American Crew of an Air Sea Rescue boat was shown over "Waimana" the U.S. Skipper invited the Waimana Crew to a scrumptious meal as only Americans could supply.

"Waimana's" Fate

After the war "Waimana" lay in Port Moresby until sold to a Mission operating in New Britain. There, with the centre mast removed, (it is believed) was used to carry timber.



Two "paid off" Schooners "Ena" and "Waimana" having served the RAAF Marine Section faithfully, now lie idle and deserted in Port Moresby, awaiting disposal to the highest bidder. What a sorry end to an Australian era in sail.
(Ron McGraw)

"Marine Section Merauke"

in
Dutch New Guinea

E.W. (Ted) Harding, 436985, (was an Air Crew Number in WA) entered RAAF Clontarf, No.5 Initial Training School in June 1943. When Ted and another Air Crew mate heard about the Marine Section they sought leave to apply. An interview with FLTLT Bill Lucas was successful and both 18 year old trainees were soon on their way to RAAF Rathmines to undergo training.

On successful completion of their course both were posted with Ted being flown into Merauke on the south coast of Dutch New Guinea near the border with Papua.

Although the Marine Section at Merauke operated under No.44 OBU, it would appear they tended to function as an independent Unit. The Main Base and airfield was some four miles inland where a Kitty Hawk Squadron operated with Dutch Pilots and the aircraft were serviced and maintained by RAAF Ground Crews. The airstrip was also used as a staging field for aircraft flying onto other Bases with personnel, supplies and stores.

The Marine Section men had constructed their own permanent living quarters from "borrowed" materials and built their own personal creature comforts. Upper section of walls was covered with mosquito netting which was also a deterrent to flies and other insects that the tropics abound. Each member of the Unit was rostered to perform the household chores along with their duties to maintain their own boats.

Boats on Strength.

55 foot Lugger with a Main and Mizzen sails

28 foot river Supply Boat

60 foot Crash Boat 03.6 with triple screws

30 foot Crash Boat 08.16 with twin screws

24 foot Work Boat 09.11

30 foot Bomb Scow was also used as a Refueling Barge for refueling Catalina flying boats that were on their way to, or returning from operations.

Laying of flare paths and clearing the river of flotsam or jetsam when Catalinas were expected to land was a very important task. Floating logs and branches were an ever present danger to travelling boats for considerable damage could be done to any hull.

Regular Supply Ships brought in supplies and fuel for both the Marine Section as well as the Main Base. Base trucks passed close by to M.S. camp when a supply vessel called and by this means the men of the Section travelled to the Main Base especially when a Movie Film would be showing.

On occasions Andy Rallah (MS), who spoke Malay, travelled up the Merauke River with supplies for inland villagers.



Merauke Marine Section's ingenuity and scavenging provided the materials for the construction of a more imposing living quarters that boasted a mosquito proof environment in remote Merauke, on south coast of Dutch New Guinea.
(Ted Harding)



These young men of the Marine section found their Unit greatly expanded with the arrival of a Marine Section Boat from Port Moresby.
(Ted Harding)



Palm Sunday was celebrated in the near by Merauke Church by the local people, who originally brought here from Java by the Dutch settlers to grow copra.
(T. Harding)



A Lugger of the Marine Section at a mooring in the Iolandon River near Merauke.
(T. Harding)



Alex Curnow (WA), Gerry Denny (WA) and Geoff Medlicot (NSW) awaiting the arrival of a Catalina Flying Boat. (R.Harding)



Incredibly high tides were experienced in the Merauke River together with extremely fast flowing tides. To fall over board was usually fatal so the Crews of the Marine Section exercised the utmost care. (T.Harding)



The local New Guinea people were known as Kia Kia and they tended to live on the opposite side of the river but not visited by the Marine Section Personnel.
(T. Harding (WA))



There was one Kia Kia village on the Dutch side of the river
(T. Harding)

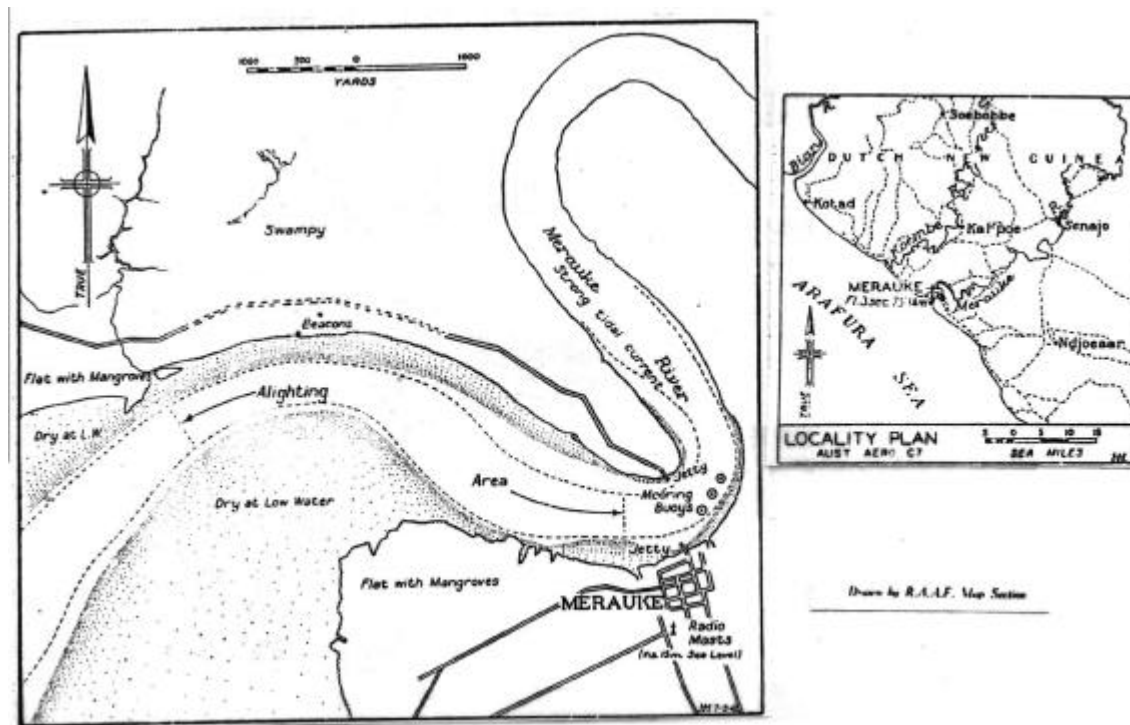
Andy made these trips on his own as the other men had their own particular duties in keeping their craft in tip top condition for the ever present possibility of an emergency.

Nearby Dutch Settlement consisted of descendents of people from Timor, Malaya and Java, who belonged to a Christian Community. Their Church was the centre of their village life. They produced copra for export.

Original inhabitants of this part of New Guinea had their own village nearby but across the Merauke River.

On occasions other Marine Section boats called into Merauke giving both groups a chance to socialize and exchange yarns. Andy Rallah provided the atmosphere for a party, being a competent accordion player with a wide repertoire of popular Air Force songs and current popular songs and music shown in movie films. Andy was no doubt an asset to any isolated group of men.

Moral was greatly enhanced in any small community by the ability of men to "fit in" and contribute to the common good. Men working on boats relied heavily on one another in the day to day operations as well as those emergency.



Merauke, Marine Section located on the south coast of Dutch New Guinea was established to provide refuelling facilities for Flying Boats as well as Air Sea Rescue Boats for the near by RAAF Air Base.

06.14 Steel Supply Ship

the

"Ruptured Duck"

Details from shipmates Peter Ryan and Frank O'Brien

After Frank O'Brien (128156) completed his rookie's course in 1943 he was posted to RAAF Karumba in the Gulf of Carpentaria as a General Hand with No.43 Squadron (Catalinas). On his arrival he was told to report to the Marine Section, as they needed another hand for refueling Cats. It wasn't long before the O.C. suggested that Frank re-muster to the Marine Section. Necessary paper work was put in motion when suddenly Frank went down with Dengue Fever, which resulted in entering the Repatriation Hospital in Melbourne.

On discharge from hospital he was told to report to RAAF Rathmines on Lake Macquarie to under go training for Motor Boat Crew. There he met up with Peter Ryan and with other members on Course were taught boat handling and how to sail the Whaler, which led to more sailing in their free time.

Frank's posting came through and the next thing he knew was boarding a Sunderland Flying boat and later landing in Port Moresby. There he climbed into a DC3, and after take off, the aircraft kept circling until they reached a height to take them through the mountain range pass and on to Madang.

At the newly formed Marine Section Frank took his turn, with the others to crew on a variety of boats. In the mean time Frank and Bill Haynes bought out a Dhobi Business and set up washing clothes. Their valued "customers" were the Commanding Officer and Officer Commanding, along with others. Frank's turn on the Refueling Barge and the spare time that was available prompted a degree of ingenuity on his part. At an arranged interview with the "Boss" Frank suggested that it would be an advantage if he could be appointed permanently to the Refueling Barge so that the C.O.'s washing could be done. This suggestion was made official and so the Dhobi Firm flourished, with the proviso that no money meant no clothes were handed over. Shirts at a cost of 6d, 9d for shorts and a range of prices for other items soon saw a thriving business. Clothing was washed, folded and delivered but No ironing.

Frank operated as the Coxswain on the Fuel Barge that provided the fuel for Martin Mariners, Catalinas and Sunderlands, as well a RAN Air Sea Rescue vessel No.925, "Air Mercy" (Lt. Bill David as Skipper) for this boat used aviation fuel. Frank then found himself posted to 06.14 a 120foot Steel Supply Ship that had just begun operating out of Madang.



06.14 was one of the new steel cargo boats designed for the Marine Section and was here being launched in the yards of the Builders in Port Phillip Bay. The Marine Section Crew soon came aboard and commenced training in the operation and handling of this 120 foot boat before sailing to Rose Bay in Sydney.
(C. Symons)



The Skipper of 0614 from Sydney was FLTLT Eric "Bully" Hayes and the voyage north introduced the new Crew to the quite violent rolling, so the ship was Christened the "Ruptured Duck"
(Frank O' Brien)



On the voyage along the north coast of New Guinea to Madang 0614 ran into some very heavy weather that threatened to wash overboard the cartons of beer on the port deck. Although saved they never reached their destination.
(Frank O'Brien)



Basic sailing training was introduced to new Motor Boat Crews at RAAF Rathmines as part of the course. To many this was often the first time they had been on a boat.
(Chris Symons)

06.14 Steel Supply Ship

Peter (Darkie) Ryan was posted to 06.14 soon after she came from the Company, who built her in Melbourne. A number of these specially designed vessels would be operated by the RAAF Marine Section Crews.

Like all brand new vessels a great deal of work still had to be done before commencing duties in far off New Guinea.

Eventually the 06.14 set sail for Rose Bay in Sydney Harbour where Captain FLTLT Eric (Bully) Hayes took over.

The Crew

Skipper	FLTLT Eric Hayes
First Mate	
Second Mate	
Engineer	
Engineer	
Engineer	
Radio Operator	
Electrician	
Cook	
Deck Hands	
Peter Ryan	
Frank O'Brien	
3	
4	

After final provisions were on board the 06.14 set sail with a vital cargo of beer, a DC3 wing, and engine parts for delivery to RAAF Townsville. The skipper had one strict rule that no one was to "whistle" while the ship was under way, but once moored you could whistle, sing, and dance.

From Townsville a cargo was delivered to Port Moresby then a return trip back to Townsville to pick up another cargo for Port Moresby. Then commenced a journey to Milne Bay and then on up the east coast to Lae. A cargo of cement caused an ulcer to form on Peter's left foot so he was put ashore in the Hospital at Lae.

While he was "holidaying" in Lae the 06.14, now called the "Ruptured Duck", 120 feet of "fighting fury" made a voyage to New Britain to deliver a cargo to Jacquinet Bay, where a new port facility had been constructed by the Army.

When the 06.14 returned to Madang Harbour both Peter and Frank joined the ship. Living quarters for the Crew consisted of cabins for the Skipper, Mates, Engineers and Radio Operator while the rest had a very large cabin below with eight bunks. A Galley and Mess was also aft but often the Crew ate sitting on a seat in the open.



Using the 06.14 motor boat "Titch", the Crew had time to do a little exploring around Madang. L to R: Jack Tapp, Frank O'Brien, Peter Ryan, SGT Engineer, Engineer, Cook and in front Engineer. (Frank O'Brien)



Peter Ryan appears to have aspirations to be Skipper of 06.14. Looking back to those far off days all those young men of the Crew remember it as a great adventure in their lives. (Frank O'Brien)

Perhaps the threat to "kill" the Cook if meals were not acceptable resulted in great food preparation. Perhaps the ingenuity of one of the Engineers or his ability to give a heart rendering account of the hardship of life at sea with little in the way of victuals usually resulted in a generous and splendid assortment of "goodies". When the opportunity arose to visit an American Supply Ship or a shore base PX store always resulted in foods of such great diversity from the most generous Americans. Most Aussie Marine Section personnel had the utmost praise for the American Supply Bases where equipment and spare parts were freely available.

On a voyage the 06.14 made to Oro Bay led to an incident. They were about to depart when an American Liberty ship moored just ahead of them and off loaded a new Jeep. With quiet efficiency the lonely Jeep was silently whisked aboard and hidden below as they proceeded to sea. The Skipper of 06.14 was now Warrant Officer Harry Hunt a one time Skipper of a Manly Ferry went below and preceded to paint the number 06.14 on the side of the Jeep.

On arrival at Lae a signal was sent to the ashore requesting a Landing Barge to be brought along side. A signal came back wanting to know why a Landing Barge was required?

"We want to take our Jeep ashore," was the reply from the Skipper.

The Jeep was duly delivered ashore and the fuel tank filled and a trailer provided so that all the Crew could get a place, except Frank O'Brien, who had drawn the short straw and had to stay on board and guard the ship.

Later that night the sight seeing Crew returned from the shore pictures and carefully covered their Jeep with a tarpaulin and left it on shore for loading in the morning.

After breakfast the loading hands mustered to commence loading their Jeep when some one noticed a forlorn trailer on the wharf and no Jeep. Some thieves had stolen their Jeep and the prime suspect was an Army Timber constructed Vessel, which had been there, had now disappeared.

At a later date, while at Milne Bay the Ship's Crew was given a Weapons Personnel Carrier for personal transportation when in port.

The 06.14 had gained its nickname for its violent rolling, and in following heavy seas, the wheel could be suddenly wrenched from the hands of the helmsman. A load of precious cartons of beer was loaded on the deck at Lae and two M.P.'s (Military Police) came aboard to guard the valuable beer. During heavy rain and violent storm the two Guards were stricken with sea sickness and were below when Frank, the helmsman called the Skipper and announced he wanted to be relieved.



Although V. P. Day happened on the 15 August 1945 and marked the end of the war against Japan not all Japanese Commanders stopped fighting. Not until 13 September did General Adachi finally surrender to Major General H.C. H. Robertson of the Australian Division at Cape Wom near Wewak. (Frank O'Brien)



Fighting men & women around the World welcomed men & women of the entertainment profession, who performed for them. Here Gracie Fields & her husband gave a Concert in Madang to a very appreciative audience.

(Frank O'Brien)

"Why?" came the reply.

"Look Skipper, the beer cartons are disintegrating and being swept overboard through the scuppers, and I need to rescue them with the help of some of the Crew!" explained Frank.

When Frank returned from the rescue the Skipper asked where Frank had hidden the beer?

"Safely in the chain locker," he was informed.

Next morning in the calm of Madang Harbour the two MP's ventured on deck and inquired about the missing beer cartons.

"Swept overboard during the violent storm," came the explanation.

That night the Crew of 06.14 demolished the booty.

06.14 wasn't involved in the "shooting war" but twin .5 Browning Machine guns were mounted on both sides of the Bridge in case of defence.

Japanese were still bitterly defending their last foothold at Wewak and were coming under the constant bombing attacks from both Australian and American aircraft as well as the ships of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Australian AIF Army was constantly engaging the Japanese defenders.

The Skipper enquired about islands still in control by the Japanese for he was required to transport a full cargo of aviation fuel to Aitape for use by the Bombing Squadrons based there. As some of the off shore islands had light canons the 06.14 kept well to seaward on the trip, for the 44 gallon drums were stacked high above the deck.

While at Madang, the British entertainer, Gracie Fields, with her husband, put on a Concert for all the Servicemen and Servicewomen in the region. Gracie Fields had toured the Middle East and the Far East before coming on to New Guinea entertaining the Troops. She was well known to the Aussies through the films she had made in England.

It was during this period that the Atomic Bombs were used and the Japanese in this region finally surrendered.

Borneo Campaign

Prior to the Australian Forces invasion of Borneo Liberator four engine bombers carried out raids on Japanese Bases and oil refineries and then continued the assault. The Australian Task Force invaded Tarakan on the east coast 1 May 1945 and this was followed by a landing on Labuan Island on 10 June. Brunei and Balikpapan then came under attack on 1 July. Fierce fighting continued in all areas with the support of naval bombardments, special rocket firing boats anchored near shore, and the continuous air strikes.

Some have considered the invasion of Borneo was unnecessary, but without it, perhaps the lives of thousands of Allied Prisoners of War still held by the Japanese Forces, would have met the same horrible fate that befell the men on the Death Marches from Sandakan.

RAAF Marine Section

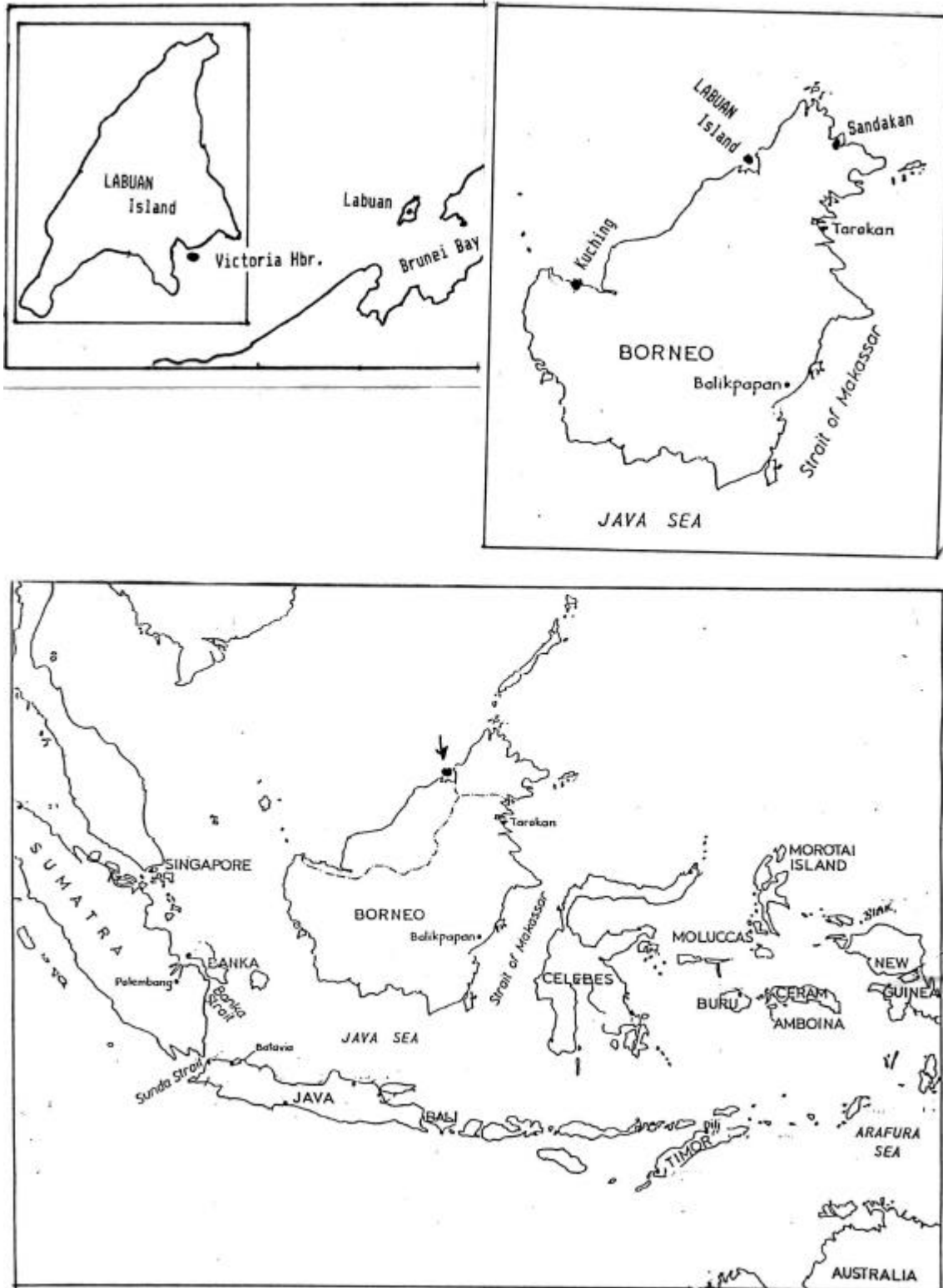
Marine Section Boats and Crews commenced duties at Labuan Island as soon as it was cleared of Japanese defenders. Vessel 06.12, a 600 ton Supply Ship of the RAAF had made the long voyage from Melbourne. A/SQNLDR Jim Hewett (see Cairns Base) arrived in Labuan attached to the Headquarters as well as being C.O. of the Marine Section. One of his first assigned duties was to have suitable flying boat moorings placed in position. Fortunately Jim discovered an Army Engineer friend, who had the necessary equipment and resources, to make the moorings.

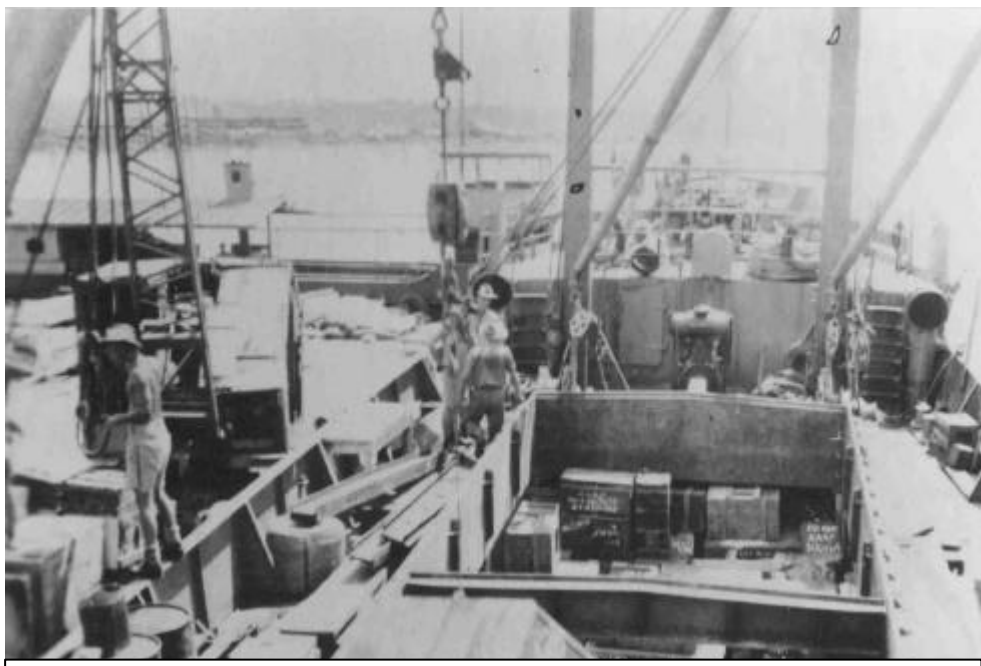
Jim, who had spent considerable time after Cairns Base, in RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne, where he was responsible for the Postings of Marine Section Personnel, was finally back in an active role. 06.10 was kept busy supplying Units with the whole range of materials required to maintain pressure on the enemy.

When the news of the Japanese surrender occurred in Tokyo on 2 September 1945, a flotilla of vessels was assembled to effect the rescue of the Prisoners of War, who were held in a camp at Kuching on the north western tip of Borneo. While sailing down the north coast during the night a signal was received to cancel the voyage and return to Labuan Island. Fortunately there were no collisions occurred during this night time manoeuvre.

The Japanese Commander at Kuching would not surrender, and this was universal throughout the region. Beaufighters kept up a constant patrol over the Cuching Camp in case the Japanese tried to move the Prisoners Of War. Jim Hewett was able to arrange a flight with one of the Pilots, presumably to assess the harbour layout! It wasn't until 11 September did the Kuching accept the surrender and allow the Australian Military Police to supervise take over. Medical teams moved in and urgent supplies soon arrived.

Borneo Campaign





The never ending need for supplies to sustain Allied Servicemen, Prisoners of War, and local people kept 0612 and her young Crew constantly busy.
(Jim Hewett)



While at Labuan 06.12 under went extensive refit in the Island Dry Dock to prepare her for the long voyage back to Cairns in Queensland now that the war was over.

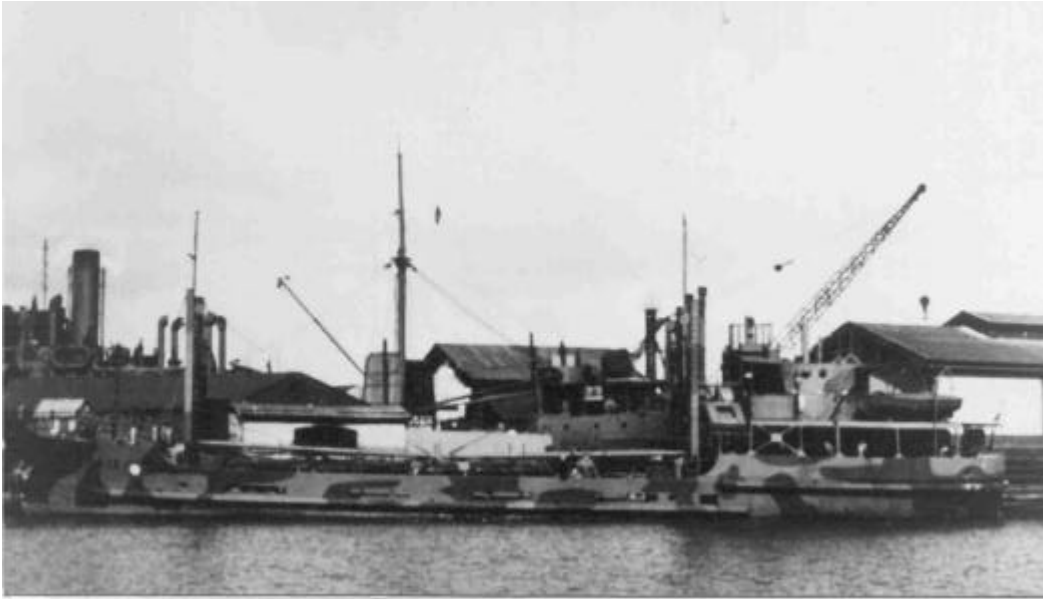
(Jim Hewett)



Members of the Crew of 06.12 made friends with the local people where ever they visited.
(Jim Hewett)



Flight Sergeant Al Ballinghall, the First Engineer of 0612, had the responsibility to have the ship in first class condition.
(Jim Hewett)



06.12, a cargo carrying vessel of the Marine Section had been built in Melbourne then made the long voyage to Borneo to play a vital role in the rescue of both Australian & Allied Prisoners of War & local people. (J.Hewett)



Australian Beaufighters kept up patrols over this Prisoner of War Camp at Kuching to prevent another “death march” as had happened at Sandakan. SQNLDR Jim Hewett of the Marine Section, flew with one of Beaufighter Crews to assess the Port. (Jim Hewett)



Japanese POW soldiers were put to work loading and unloading 06.12 under the watchful eyes of the Australian Military Police.
(Jim Hewett)



These fierce Dyaks, in collaboration with the “Special Reconnaissance Detachment Guerrillas”, finally “persuaded” a Japanese group in the Truson region, to surrender.
(Jim Hewett)



A final photograph of the Crew of 06.12 before departing Boreno bound for Cairns. Jim Hewett had also been the officer in Charge of the Marine Section in Cairns before being posted to RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne. (Jim Hewett)



SQNLDR Jim Hewett (left) Skipper of 06.12 with Warrant officer Maloney, resplendent in uniforms of another era, about to embark on the long voyage back to Australia, having completed their allotted task in Borneo.

(Jim Hewett)



06.12 about to dive into the Arufura Sea, while engine repairs were carried out. On another occasion when a request for a swim was made by the Crew, the Skipper fortunately delayed his approval, for shortly afterwards a gigantic shark cruised by. No further swimming was requested. (Jim Hewett)



A final Crew photograph was taken as 06.12 entered Cairns Harbour, for shortly afterwards, the Crew that had seen and experienced a great deal together, would disperse to all States for Discharge. For many this would be the last time they would ever see one another. (Jim Hewett)

One group of Japanese would not surrender in the Trusan River region until a force of Special Reconnaissance Detachment Guerillas, and Head Hunting Dyaks attacked this group forcing a surrender on 29 October 1945.

The RAAF Marine Section was fully committed with the constant flow of arriving and departing Catalina Flying Boats involved in the transport of POW from Singapore and the region. 06.12 had Japanese prisoners to work loading and unloading supplies for a great number of villagers who had been finally liberated.

A/SQNLDR Jim Hewett and his Crew on 06.12 finally departed Labuan months after the end of hostilities, and a complete refit had been completed in a dry dock, and set sail for the long voyage back to Cairns. There the Crew would be disbanded and the process of leaving the Royal Australian Air Force, where ever lasting friendships had been forged, and returns to their homes and get on with a new endeavour and way of life.

Once again the RAAF Marine Section had played a very important role in their contribution that finally led to the defeat of the Japanese and the liberation of millions of people of the region.



Victoria Harbour on the Island of Labuan, was a most important port for the marine section in Borneo. It was also the embarkation point for a flotilla of small ships, that set out to bring relief to the Prisoners of War held in the infamous Kuching Camp.

SQNLDR Jim Hewett, (now in his 90+ years) readily recalls the deep affection he still retains for the wonderful Men of the Marine Section.

(Tom Dean, RAAF Pilot)



Royal Australian Navy

AIR SEA RESCUE BOATS in operations around

Australia, New Guinea, Morotai and Boreno



As 928 "Air Seek" having completed her time in the Royal Australian Navy was handed over to the RAAF. After a complete refit was here showing the RAAF Type number 02.113 with the kangaroo in the Roundel of the post war period..
(Norm Greaves)



These powerful, high speed Air Sea Rescue Boats, Crewed by R.A.N. personnel, played an important role, in addition to the RAAF. Lt. Bill David was the Skipper of 925 when it prepared to in Sydney for the long voyage that let finally to the west end of New Guinea. (Bill David)



Laying along side this very large American boat is an R.A.N. Air Boat, with its two turrets, mounting twin machine guns, can be clearly seen. RAAF Wireless Air Gunners were posted to these boats to operate the radios and machine guns. (Bill Lucas)

Royal Australian Navy
Air Sea Rescue Boat No.925
"Air Boat"

Lieutenant W.E. (Bill) David was posted to Sydney from Fremantle as Skipper of "Air Mercy" No.925, a 63 foot U.S.A. built Air Sea Rescue Boat. His Crew included Petty Officer Jack Bosanko Royal Navy, who had been Coxswain for Louis Mountbattern, seven RAN seamen and two RAAF Wireless Air Gunners, who had recently returned from training in Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS).

The boat was 63 foot long with two 600Hp Hall Scott engines and having a cruising range of 14.5 hours, but capable of speeds up to 33 knots.

A great deal of work had to be done to prepare "Air Mercy" for a long voyage for she had been on a mooring for a considerable length of time. Once stores and supplies were safely stowed onboard together with all the navigation charts and gear Bill made ready to depart.

"Air Mercy" and her new Crew, with a temporary Skipper, left Sydney in April 1945 while Lt. Bill David attended a special course in Sydney. On completion of the course Bill rejoined Air Mercy in Brisbane and took over command on 29 April 1945, and proceeded up the east coast calling into a number of Ports and Marine Section Bases until they reached Thursday Island. From here they set sail for Port Moresby where Air Mercy joined several Air Boats on 11 June 1945.

After reporting to the Naval Officer in Charge (NOIC) Lt Commander Williams he indicated that all Air Boats should depart as soon as possible to take up their respective duties. Air Mercy departed Port Moresby after A.B. Fuller and Stoker Hammil had visited the Base Sick Bay.

After refuelling in Milne Bay their next port was Oro Bay, a busy United States supply distribution centre. From there Air Mercy sailed up the East Coast of New Guinea only calling into ports to take on fuel and needed supplies and collect sailing orders. Arrival in Madang was on 24 June 1945 after a rough voyage.

Bill visited AOR SQNLDR Allison in charge of No.42 OBU Marine Section and there made contact with SQNLDR Moir and PLTOFF Baker regarding a mooring.

Bill then proceeded to Alexshaven where Air Mercy entered a small floating dock where the port propeller was replaced. While these repairs were being completed the Crew had an opportunity to visit the RAAF Air Strip some 10 miles inland to see a picture show. Both Air Boats 916 and 920 were also in port being fitted out. The Crew repainted the bottom



A group of villagers on Solo Island, Aitape, New Guinea. (Bill David)

of the hull of Air Mercy then returned to Madang where they had to paint the boat with the new yellow paint.

The sudden arrival of two months of personal mail brought a temporary halt to painting so that serious reading could be accomplished.

A general clean up of the ship was ordered followed by a "rounds" (inspection) with the Coxswain Petty Officer Bosanko found everything in good order. Bill was hopeful that the RAAF Marine Section would install a refrigerator. One evening the Navy entertained every one after the Madang Sailing Club had conducted a race.

The following morning after stores and supplies were taken on board Air Mercy sailed for Alexshaven with Commander Reid and McLean, BEO Lt Kershall and party for the "Lolita" Enquiry. A few days later Air Boat 910 finally arrives from Milne Bay. Lt Bill David made a visit to RAAF No.111 Flight Air Sea Rescue Catalinas and saw a Cat. being brought up the new slipway. A dinner with the Cat. Crew followed, but was interrupted by a signal that a Kittyhawk had come down in the sea to the north/east. FLTLT Miller immediately took off for the search.

Bill moved Air Mercy to the RAAF Marine Section to have a new Radio Compass fitted which was followed by a trip to Rimu with a party and the Adjutant to swing the compass. On 1 August Bill flew to Wewak in the ASR Catalina "Gibson Girl" with the Skipper Gordon Straits, which gave Bill an excellent introduction to the coastline, the smoking volcano on Manuum Island, and the Ramu and Sepick Rivers. A bumpy landing in a cross swell at Wewak was an introduction to Catalina flying for Bill. At the Stores Depot Bill was issued with new jungle green before reporting to Headquarters. Roads and facilities were being constructed to make Wewak an important Stores Centre.

Japanese were still active in the hills overlooking Wewak as well as several hundred still occupying two islands a few miles up the coast. "Gibson Girl's" arrival back was greeted by a band and special Parade but it was not for Bill and the Catalina Crew but for General Robinson whose arrival had been delayed by an hour. The Catalina, with Bill on board took off for Annauling Lake where he again was most impressed by the two great river systems.

Next morning a signal arrived directing Bill to take the NOIC of New Guinea to Alexishafen at 0900 hours but an electrical fault prevented this so 910 "Air Speed" was given the job. Bill David was given a "blast" from the Port Director for not having the electrical fault corrected the day before.

Bill went to meet the new CO, FLTLT Hoare at the AOR where he was given the job of taking a bomb disposal party to Karkar. Major Moyes, ANGAU Headquarters had a very

pretty place set out like a park. On 5 August with water tanks filled, a Naval Party Delegation joined the RAAF Group for the delousing of bombs and departed Madang for Alexishafen. From there they moved onto Dogowan plantation where four bombs were set off. Bill experienced some problem with the starboard rudderpost binding but this was rectified. Stores were then delivered to Mr Cameron and Mr Carpenter at Marangi Plantation and then followed by a visit to Kallili Plantation. Although some slept ashore there was hardly any room on board. More bombs were destroyed the day following. Just before arriving back at Alexishaven Air Mercy struck a log that set up heavy vibrations, which was attended, to once back in port.

Great News, the Atom Bombs.

A radio news programme announced the dropping of the Atom bombs and the subsequent Japanese surrender, which was greeted with cheers and rockets, flares and guns. A big party was organized at No.111 ASR Flight and a sports day kept many occupied. Bill visited the Base Hospital to see Brian Ryan, who was being sent home on HMAS Diamantina, then spent the evening at HMAS Madang with Lt. Arnold, RMS.

Air Mercy was ordered to Alexishafen to have both propellers replaced. While there news was received that Japan accepted the Surrender Treaty so the Crew had a day and a half off so most went to a picture show at No.42 OBU.

A game of softball was organized between No.42 OBU Marine Section and the Crew of No.925 Air Mercy and the Navy won both games 6 to 3 and 5 to 2.

The arrival of the English singer Gracie Fields resulted in a Concert for all the surrounding Units. Bill David orders to relieve Sub Lt.Madderson and No.916 Air Trail at Middleburg Island. On 19 August the Ship's Crew visited a native "sing sing" at Goom the ANGAU Village and witnessed a very colourful spectacle. Every village had its own contribution to make and that evening was spent at the Navy picture venue with the ASR Officers.

Next day Air Mercy refuelled and took on supplies and departed Madang and sailed for Wewak calling into Alexishaven to see the Engineer to have the ship's telegraph controls repaired. The following morning was bright and crisp with the mainland covered in mist for their departure. Three hours later Manum Island was abeam to starboard. A great deal of driftwood was encountered off the Sepik River mouth and by 1400 hours anchored off Cape Moem and made a request for fuel. A Landing Barge carrying carrying a tanker truck came along side and commenced refueling Air Mercy.

Next day all the Crew were issued with new clothing from the "Q" Store before sailing onto Aitape Cove.

Gracie Fields was giving a Concert that night but the Air Mercy Crew stayed onboard and listened to the concert through the radio while the rain poured down.

Departed next morning for Hollandia arriving there at 1240 hours and Dave met the Officer in Charge Lt. Commander Gaskin, who had been the "Jimmy the One" at Leeuwin when the NAP was formed. Four hours later set sail for Tanah Merah Bay and covered 188 miles that day. The trip to Mios Woendi ended in running aground on a large mud bank where they remained until high tide rose. Floating trees and debris was everywhere so caution was required but later speed was increased to 20 knots. By early afternoon they were moored to the U.S. Base, P.T. Boat Jetty where Dave met Lt. Nimrod Sharol and taken to a very posh Officers' Club. While there the Crew entertained the Crew of an American ASR Boat, who traded a new propeller for six bottle of beer. The U.S. Boat were waiting to leave for the Philippines and by travelling light could make 35 knots and have a range of 500 miles.

Meos Woendi proved to be an excellent harbour enclosed by a ring of reefs. There was a hive of industry and had every sort of repair workshop and a vast array of recreational facilities. Electric light was provided for night tennis and horseshoe pitching. On 26 August Air Mercy departed and two hours later moored along side 916 Air Trail in Sorido Harbour (Biak) where SQNLDR Allenson and Lt. Tissdale were waiting on No.5 wharf to take Bill to the Port Director. After dining with the Dutch Officers Bill David flew in a Beaufort Bomber to Middleburg Island and stayed with No.46 OBU.

Bill's task was to find suitable anchorages and finally settled for a small coral reef in 5 fathoms of water. Because of the boisterous winds that come off the 9000 foot mountains could cause mooring problems. The day following Bill again departed in the Beaufort and the Pilot gave Bill a good look at the shores of the Dutch New Guinea and Noemfoor Island before landing back on Biak's Mokmer Aerodrome. After reporting his findings to SQNLDR Allenson Bill discovered his Crewman Stoker Hammil had been taken to the 17 U.S. General Hospital with Malaria. Two hours later 925 Air Mercy departed for Mios Woendi to make contact with a Catalina that had flown up from Madang to search for an aircraft down some where between there and Morotai. Bill then returned to Sorido Harbour.

A signal from the Navy instructed Bill David to take his ship to Middleburg and Amsterdam Islands to make a detailed survey for aircraft moorings but none were found. During the following months Lt. Bill David and his Crew took Air Mercy back and forwards from Biak to Manus Base calling into the intermediate places and ports under the instruction of the Naval Officer in Charge of the Area.



Reports indicated that Japanese soldiers were starving, but this group of Japanese Officers did not appear to be effected by the lack of victuals. In the rear is No. 1 Major Simms of the N.E.I., No. 2 SQNLDR J. Alanson, No3. Lt in RAN, No.4 Leading Stoker Bear & No.5 A.B. Fuller.

Major Matuimoto (white collar) Leader of the Japanese Surrender party in Biak on 11 September 1945. (Bill David)



Lt Bill David (90+ years) still vividly recalls those far off days and proudly displays his model of 925 in a prominent position in his home.

(Bill David)

Japanese Officers

On 11 September 1945 Lt. Bill David received instructions to return a group of Japanese Officers from Biak to their Base at Manokowari.

Allied Passengers were:

Major Patrick	U.S. Forces
Major Simons	N.E.I.
SQNLDR Allenson	RAAF
Captain Dixon	RAN
Lt. Tisdale	RAN

Posting Home

On the 7 February 1946 Bill took the replacement Crew and new Skipper, Lt R. Trimble for a shake down trip to introduce them to 925 Air Mercy.

The following day found Bill David with his sea chest and personal luggage packed left his quarters on Air Mercy having spent an interesting ten months visiting a great many places, meeting many personnel from different Services and visiting different countries.

Lt. Bill David had a close association with the RAAF Air Sea Rescue Flights and the RAAF Marine Section Units which all played a very important role in his Tour of Duty.

The Skipper of 925 Air Mercy departed for Australia and Discharge.

RAN Air Boats

in this region of New Guinea were:

909 Air Hope	Lt. Lewis
910 Air Speed	Lt. Dick Williams
916 Air Trail	Lt. Maddison
925 Air Mercy	Lt. Bill David

Other Air Boats operated out of Darwin and in the W.A. Kimberly Region at West Bay, RAAF Truscott Base.

All these details came about through an interview with **Lieutenant Bill David in 1995**, and reading a copy of his Log he maintained during his time on 925 "Air Mercy".



Air Boats

New design Air Sea Rescue Boats.

(following details have been extracted from a Marine Section Warrant Officer), Bernie Pollard's letter he sent to Marine Section Sergeant Radio Operator, Eric Mc Nabb)

The first four of these new American Air Sea Rescue Boats arrived in Australia late in December 1943 for use by the RAAF Marine Section. These four boats were delivered to RAAF Point Cook where A.W.A. were contracted to install AT5/AR8 Bendix Radio Compasses and 5043 VHF local A/C Coms.

RAAF Marine Crews

Warrant Officer Coxswain
 Sergeant Coxswain
 Warrant Officer W.T. Operator
 Sergeant Fitter
 Corporal Fitter
 Two Motor Boat Crew

These boats were known as the Type 02. and were painted in the RAAF colours.

Air Boats

Air Chief Air Master Air Mist Air Rest

Details

Displacement	23 tons
Dimensions	OA Length 63 feet Beam 15.3 feet
Draft	4 feet
Engines	Two Hall Scott Defender 630 HP V 12 Motors (petrol)
Speed	33.5 knots
Range	14.5 hours
Fuel	1200 gallons. 20 knots 56 gal @ 1500 revs. 33 knots 110 gal @ 2100 revs.
Builders	U.S. Harbour Boats, Fellows & Stewart, South Coast
Design	ARB Aircraft Rescue Boats.

Royal Australian Navy

The RAN objected to these vessels being commanded by a RAAF Non Commissioned Officer, so the Navy Auxiliary Patrol was formed and the Air Boats transferred to the Navy.

Navy Crew

Lieutenant	in Charge
Sub Lieutenant	
Chief Petty Officer	Coxswain
Chief Petty Officer	Engine Room Artificer
Leading Hand	Engine Room Artificer
Two Seamen	
Warrant Officer	RAAF Signaller.

The four Air Boats were handed over to the Navy in June 1944 as fully serviceable vessels but were not Commissioned until:

918 Air Chief 12.8.44	917 Air Mist 20.9.44
919 Air Master 31.8.44	921 Air Rest 20.9.44
(923 Air View, the last 20.11.45)	

RAN Air Boats

924 "Air Cloud" was the first Air Boat to go to West Bay, No.58 OBU to replace HMAS Coongoola, which then returned to Darwin. Air Cloud suffered propeller damage on a reef and therefore had to return to Darwin so was replaced by 912 "Air Foam" (it is believed). Later 926 "Air Sailor" and 923 "Air View" took up Station at West Bay (RAAF Truscott) in the Kimberlies of W.A.

RAN Air Boats also operated in the New Guinea region during WW2 as well as Morotai and Boreno.

February 1946 RAAF & RAN Meeting

to Discuss the transfer of Air Boats to the RAAF.

19 Air Boats were in commission so it was proposed that 4 would be retained by the RAN & 15 transferred to the RAAF.

Note:

From Records there appear to be some differences in list numbers.

List of Boats to RAAF

RAAF Register	RAN Register
02.100	908 Air Hope
02.101	909 Air Faith
02.102	911 Air Spray
02.103	912 Air Guide
02.104	913 Air Sense
02.105	914 Air Bird
02.106	920 Air Save
02.107	921 Air Rest
02.108	922 Air Clan
02.109	923 Air View
02.110	925 Air Cloud
02.111	926 Air Sailor
02.112	927 Air Watch
02.113	928 Air Seek (built by Halvorsen in Sydney)

This lists only 14 Boats instead of 15

List of Boats retained by Navy

910 Air Speed
 912 Air Foam
 916 Air Trail
 918 Air Chief
 919 Air Master
 925 Air Mercy

This list should only contain 4 boats

Note:

These lists make no reference to 917, which may be Air Mist.

Mr Bernie Pollard, ex RAAF Warrant Officer in the Marine Section reported that 13 "Air Boats" were handed over to the RAAF in 1948.

02.100 Air Hope 02.101 Air Faith 02.102 Air Spray
 02.103 Air Guide 02.104 Air Sense 02.105 Air Bird
 02.106 Air Save 02.107 Air Rest 02.108 Air Clan
 02.110 Air Cloud 02.111 Air Sailor.
 (RAAF Historical)

Note:

Only eleven boats are listed.

Bernie Pollard indicated that he had commanded 5 of the "Air Boats" between 1950 and 1970. When Darwin Base closed he brought one of the "Airboats" back to Neutral Bay in 1958 and reported that, "the Air Boats were a delight to handle in any conditions."

Disposition of Air Boats February 1946

915 Air Bird	Madang
912 Air Foam	Madang
909 Air Faith	Alexishafen
918 Air Chief	on passage to Dreger
908 Air Hope	Port Moresby
910 Air Speed	Jacquinot Bay
925 Air Mercy	Biak
913 Air Guide	Morotai
924 Air Cloud	Darwin
914 Air Sense	Thursday Island
911 Air Spray	Thursday Island

Refitting Plans

921 Air Rest	Brisbane for refit
916 Air Trail	" " "
920 Air Save	" " "
923 Air View	" " "
922 Air Faith	Sydney for refit
919 Air Master	" " "
926 Air Sailor	On passage South
927 Air Watch	" " "
909 Air Faith	" " "
910 Air Speed	" " "
925 Air Mercy	" " "

Note:

Eight other Air Boats were likely to be refitted.

All these Royal Australian Navy Boats played a vital role in Air Sea Rescue during the war against the Japanese. Their timely arrival in Australia mid 1944 coincided with the move northwards by the United States Air Sea Rescue Boats when the U.S. Air Force mounted missions on the Phillipine Islands in conjunction with the U.S. Naval Forces and their carrier based aircraft.